



Newsletter of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh
New Series Volume 13 Number 1 January 2016

FIELD OUTING: Sunday, 17th January 2016: Narsapur. Meeting point: Punjagutta (opp. Mangatrai Pearls), 6.30AM.

Spanning an area of over 40 sq. km, the Narsapur Forest is well known for its bird life. The forest is rich in small woodland birds, woodpeckers and flycatchers. Brown Fish Owl, Indian Pitta, White-bellied Drongo etc are some of the interesting sightings during past visits. Narsapur Lake also has the potential of throwing up some surprises. This will be a half-day trip. For further details and to co-ordinate, please contact Mr Shafaat Ulla (98492-29552).

MY FIRST-EVER BIRDING TRIP

Text and photos: Shreyas Reddy M



Brahminy Starling

I have recently become a student member of BSAP. I had gone to my first-ever birding field trip to Manjeera Barrage and the surrounding lakes.



Black-winged Stilt and Crocodile

I spotted Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*), Indian Pond Heron (*Ardeola grayii*), Painted Stork (*Mycteria leucocephala*), Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*), Red-wattled Lapwing (DidYouDoIt bird) (*Vanellus indicus*), Black Drongo (Kotwal) (*Dicrurus macrocercus*), Green Bee-eater (*Merops orientalis*), Pied Kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis*), Indian Spot-billed Duck (*Anas poecilorhyncha*), Baya Weavers (*Ploceus philippinus*) and their nests, Bronze-winged Jacana (*Metopidius indicus*), Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*), Wood Sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*), etc. Many birds for the first time in my life!

Of all the above birds, I liked the Red-wattled Lapwing and Bronze-winged Jacana very much.

I can't wait for the next BSAP Field trip to try my new binoculars.

Humayun uncle and Shafaat uncle helped me identify the birds and the other uncles and aunts encouraged me.

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Bird of the Month

Text and photo: Umesh Mani

White-bellied Drongo (*Dicrurus caerulescens*)



White-bellied Drongo (Talakona, 23-08-2015)

Order: Passeriformes
Family: Dicruridae
Genus: *Dicrurus*
Species: *D. caerulescens*
Size: 24 cm

Description & distribution: The White-bellied Drongo is a species of drongo found only on the Indian sub-continent, its range being spread across Nepal, India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. It is mainly black, like most drongos, but has a white belly and vent (with the two Sri Lankan sub-species, *D. c. insularis* of the northern dry zone and *D. c. leucopygialis* of the southern wet zone, having white only on the vent). The throat and breast are greyish, and the upperparts, though black, are not glossy. The tail is not as deeply forked as the Black Drongo. Young White-bellied Drongos are all-black and can resemble Black Drongos, though smaller and more compact. Young Black Drongos, on the other hand, have a lot of white on their bellies and can be confused with the White-bellied Drongo, though the white is quite scaly in appearance. In general, White-bellied Drongos in the northern parts of the range are larger, with the size declining as one moves south; the extent of white on the underside also declines with size.

The White-bellied Drongo is a resident breeder in India and Sri Lanka. In India, it is seen in the peninsular regions south of the Himalayas, west till the Aravallis and east till the Gangetic Delta.

Habitat & behaviour: The White-bellied Drongo prefers dry scrub or open forests. Usually seen singly or in small groups of up to three birds, it tends to sit upright on or close to tree-tops, and makes short aerial sallies to capture insects in the air. It may use its claws to pick up larger insects, and also to handle other prey - being opportunistic, it is known to even pick up small birds, besides sometimes partaking of flower nectar. Another commonly-observed behaviour is capturing insects that are attracted to street lights in the night. Its call is a series of staccato notes, intermingled with clear notes, and it is also known to mimic other birds, besides sometimes imitating the alarm call of the squirrel and the mewling of the cat.

Nesting: The White-bellied Drongo breeds from February to July. The nest is a grass-lined cup made of twigs, usually 20-30 feet above the ground in tree forks. It is very aggressive when nesting, and will attack potential threats much larger than itself. The usual clutch consists of 2-7 pale salmon-coloured eggs with reddish blotches on the broad end.

Local name: The White-bellied Drongo is known as 'nalla passala poligadu', 'konda passala poligadu' or 'tellapotta aitrina' in Telugu, 'pahari bhujanga' in Hindi, and 'erattai vaalan kuruvi' in Tamil (a name it shares with the Black Drongo and the Ashy Drongo).

BIRDING WITH FREEDOM
Trip Report – Shamirpet, 15th November 2015

Text and photos: Lawrence Mathappan



Scaly-breasted Munia

I could never completely enjoy birding in a car, as we do on regular basis. We would get into the car, reach the birding site, park the car and then carry our kit and start birding, then walk back to the car and move on. I feel that this way, we miss a lot as we travel from one place to another.

So I proposed to my friend Hemant that he and I go birding on his motorcycle to Shamirpet and nearby areas.

With a lot of excitement, I was ready very early on a cloudy Sunday morning with threats of possible showers. This added to the excitement as I waited for the arrival of my ride. Waiting was painful - looking at the watch, I realized Hemant needed to be given a wakeup call!

But finally when I called, he was already on the way. Soon he reached and we set course. WOW! The feeling of the fresh, early morning breeze on the face set one's soul free as we sped towards Shamirpet. The sun peeping through the clouds intermittently gave an added thrill to the drive, and I was able to see the greenery all around and hear the calls of the early birds.

Suddenly I shouted out to Hemant, and we skidded to a stop. Hemant asked what the excitement was all about. I told him, "I think I saw a Painted Francolin (*Francolinus pictus*), a few hundred meters back". Turning the bike around, we raced back to the spot. In a snap the camera popped out and click, click, we froze the bird in the frame. Sadly, it turned out to be the Grey Francolin (*Francolinus pondicerianus*), all puffed up and looking at us!

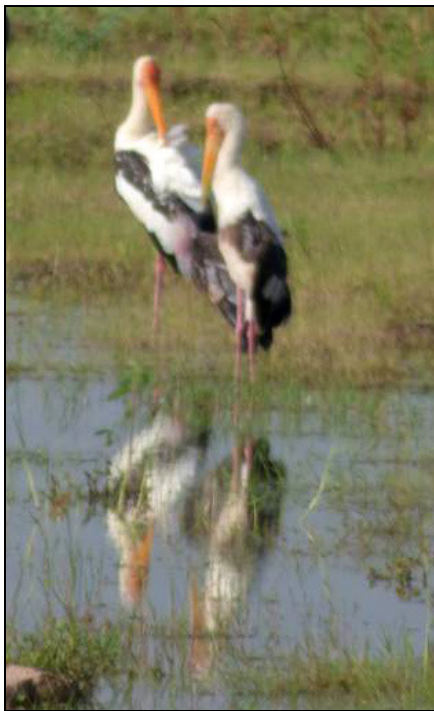


Grey Francolin

We weaved through the villages where the smell of wet fields and smoke from the morning cooking gave a feeling of freshness that we miss living in the modern dwellings. We were treated to the chirps of the sparrows, busy foraging, with Grey Francolins and Indian Silverbills (*Euodice malabarica*). Cattle were being taken to the fields as we drove slowly, soaking in nature at its best.

We turned on to the road which took us to the backwaters of the Shamirpet Lake. With the recent showers, a number of small streams were snaking their way into the lake. Hemant had other ideas, and took off, sliding, skidding and twisting through the streams and slush. It was fun - I felt like a cowboy taming a wild horse!

We reached the lake edge and rode on to the top of a small hillock which usually gets submerged when the water level is normal. From there we had a panoramic view of the lake.



Painted Stork

We saw the usual flock of Painted Storks (*Mycteria leucocephala*), Indian Spot-billed Ducks (*Anas poecilorhyncha*) and some Northern Pintails (*Anas acuta*) decorating the edge of the lake. River Terns (*Sterna aurantia*) flew across where we stood and dived to pick up fish. Far across the lake, on a tree we saw some movement, and a little while later as the birds flew towards the lake, we identified them as Grey Herons (*Ardea cinerea*).



Blue Rock Thrush

The sun was up, warming us and making us hungry. As we walked back, Red-wattled Lapwings (*Vanellus indicus*), startled at seeing us, announced their surprise, calling and flying beside us. As we hit dry land we saw an Oriental Magpie Robin (*Copsychus saularis*), a Blue Rock Thrush (*Monticola solitarius*), and a Common Stonechat (*Saxicola torquatus*).

We landed at a small eatery beside the MediCiti Hospital gate and had some hot *pooris* and *aloo sabji* with hot *chai*. Feeling refreshed, we decided to check some nearby areas. Sitting on a wire we saw the Jacobin (or Pied Crested) Cuckoo (*Clamator jacobinus*) balancing against the breeze that was almost pushing it off.



Jacobin Cuckoo

We then drove on to the road that led us to a temple on a hill top. We heard the calls of Painted Francolins but the eyes searched in vain.

That's when I got a call from my friend Dr Maini, who has a farm nearby, inviting us for lunch. This took us towards Akbarjapet. There were supposed to be some resident Spotted Owlets (*Athene brama*) here.

While the lunch was getting ready, Hemant suddenly vanished! He returned an hour later, smiling at having sighted and captured the Owlet and a few more birds in the camera.



Black Redstart (female)

Sitting down, we ate a hearty lunch of vegetables fresh from the farm, relaxed for a while, and did some Macro photography. We were informed by our host about an abandoned nest with eggs. We couldn't identify them, though.



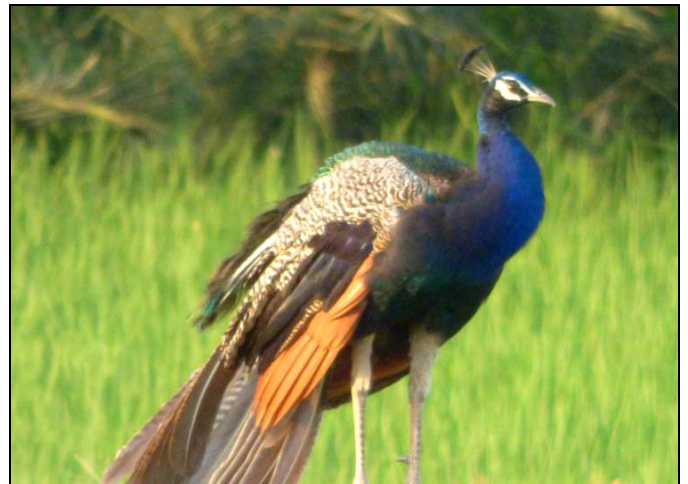
The unidentified eggs

After a while, thanking our host, we set course towards Kallkal, a village beyond Medchal. On the way we checked the Medchal Lake, which was dry. Driving around the area we saw no water bodies but we had had our fill of birds for the day and decided to make longer trips in the future.



Common Jezebel mating

On the way back, I fondly remembered the bikes of the bygone years - the old Triumph, BSA, Rajdoot, Bullet and Jawa - but whichever the bike, the thrill of riding remained the same.



Indian Peafowl

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For Private Circulation Only

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For information, write to: Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh, PO Box 45, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad – 500034. **E-group:** http://groups.google.co.in/group/bsap_online. **Website:** www.bsap.in. **Society membership** (in Rs.): Annual: 500 per annum; Student: 200 per annum; Corporate: 2000 per annum; Life: 3000. (Add Rs 75 for outstation cheques.)



Newsletter of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh
New Series Volume 13 Number 2 February 2016

FIELD OUTING: Sunday, 14th February 2016: ICRISAT, 6.45AM.

The sprawling ICRISAT campus has a variety of habitats including lakes, forest patches, grasslands, cultivated areas and scrub. As a result, it has a unique mix of species and hence has always been among the most popular birding destinations in Hyderabad. This will be a half-day trip. For further details and to co-ordinate, please contact Ms Surekha Aitabathula (99490-38532).

INDOOR MEETING: “Strange Castaways”: 4th part of BBC’s “Wonders of the Monsoon” documentary series. Wednesday, 10th February 2016, 6.00PM: Goethe-zentrum Hyderabad, 20 Journalist’s Colony, Road No. 3, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad – 500 034. (For directions, please contact 94905-09251 or 040-65526443/23350040)

Step into a world where life is shaped by the greatest weather system on earth!

Monsoon winds sweep across a vast region every year, turning drought to deluge and shaping the landscapes, the wildlife and the cultures. All life here, from the highest peaks of the Himalayas to the scorched red earth of Australia, is dominated by this rampaging weather system.

RAPTOR MELA AT POCHARAM

Text and photos: Srikanth Bhamidipati



Little Ringed Plover

Another energetic Sunday filled with lot of expectations for a good day of birding with my birding family Lawrence M, Amritha L, Gunbir Singh, Dheeraj, Sathvik, Vikramjit Singh, Anjali, Ambika and John. Great hopes and expectations were

there as we started our day near Suchitra signal with a hot cup of tea at 5:30AM, after which we headed to Pocharam, the one location which has always welcomed us with some amazing species.



Short-toed Snake Eagle

We began our journey and, as we crossed Narsapur forest, there was our first sighting for the day - a Short-toed Snake Eagle fighting off a Common Kestrel. All the shutterbugs present were busy with the raptor for nearly 30-40 minutes and finally it decided to fly away from after giving some good poses.

Then we continued our journey towards Pocharam and on the way we stopped just before Medak for a few peafowl, which were sun-basking on the rocks. After spending some five minutes there, we finally decided that we had a serious rat problem in our tummies, for which we went to our usual breakfast location, Arjun Hotel opposite Medak bus station.

It was almost 7:30AM by the time we were satisfied, and decided to proceed to our destination, Pocharam. Reaching our location, we were welcomed by the amazing calls of many different birds in the area. We parked our cars and approached the lake to see what surprises were in store for us.

As we were walking towards the lake we spotted a Grey Heron which seemed quite friendly and wasn't flying away from us as we were getting progressively closer. Then we saw that it was trapped in the water with one of those traps that fishermen set.



Amritha with Grey Heron

Here stepped in our rescuer, Amritha, who immediately got into the water and tried to rescue the bird from the trap.

During this process we heard a shout from one of our birders saying "RAAAPTORRRRR", and the attention of most of the people shifted from our rescuer to the big raptor flying over our head, which turned out to be a Bonelli's Eagle.

After clicking a few images, I again began to guide Amritha and the Grey Heron back safely to the shore, and tried to cut the knots of the trap and release the bird safely back in the water without any further damage. As a token of gratitude, it flew for a few seconds, landed close by to give us some good close-up images, and then finally flew away.



Brahminy Kite

After that we resumed our birding and were fascinated to see so many good species around - ducks and waders, small birds and raptors - e.g. Brahminy Kite, Black-bellied Tern, Bar-headed Goose, Ruddy Shelduck, Common Pochard, Bronze-winged Jacana, Golden-fronted Leafbird, Cotton Pygmy-goose, Eurasian Wigeon etc. We had a great time watching the birds flying around from all directions.

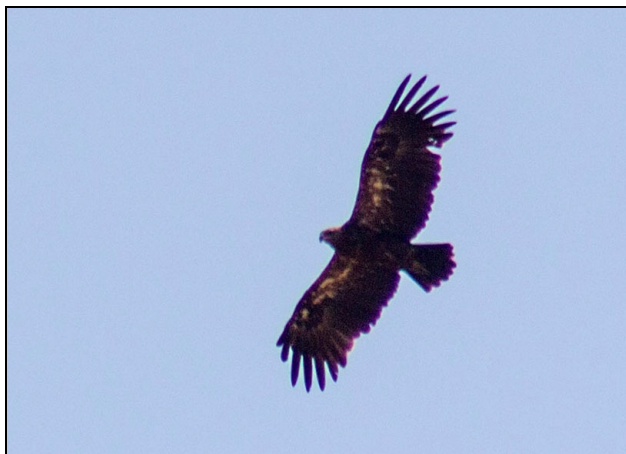


Osprey with prey

Then we spotted another biggie flying towards a big rock in the middle of the lake carrying a huge fish. It finally landed on the rock, and all the shutterbugs got busy clicking that bird. It seemed like it wasn't bothered by all of us watching it, and had decided to finish its fish no matter what. Oh, sorry - I haven't mentioned the species... It was an Osprey!

After about 30 minutes, we gave up on the idea that it would be flying any time soon, and deciding to continue with our birding, proceeded to the other parts of the lake. Finally, after 45-50 minutes of sitting on the rock and eating, it decided to take a small flight - it flew for about 30 seconds and then landed back on the same rock to finish the fish.

By now, we had spent about 3 hours, and decided to move to another site close by, named Bamanamma Cheruvu, which was just about 2 kms from the Pocharam lake. While we were coming out to the main road, we again spotted another big one, a Raptor again... All the shutterbugs were on the job of clicking the images, and we were trying to identify the bird. Finally we concluded that it was a Greater Spotted Eagle.



Greater Spotted Eagle

Heading to the lake nearby, we were surprised to see no water there. But as they say, "Never Back Down" - following this statement paid off well, as we spotted around 45 Plovers there. The most striking aspect was the golden body they had - yes, they were Pacific Golden Plovers!



Pacific Golden Plover

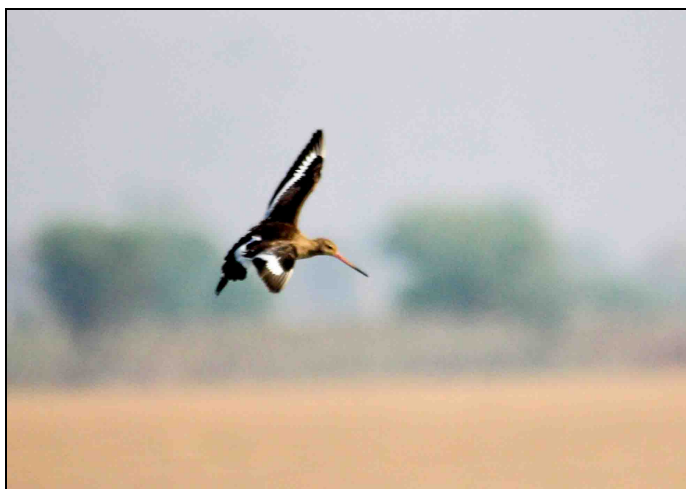
After spending some quality time with them, we decided to check out other lakes nearby, and headed towards Nizam Sagar Lake.

On the way, we stopped near some fields and saw one lone Woolly-necked Stork trying to catch some food. After taking some good images of the bird, we decided to proceed towards our next stop and, some 40 kms later, we arrived at a huge water body which was identified to be Safdulpur Lake. We stopped there for a while and enjoyed watching some Flamingos, Spoonbills and other birds.



Woolly-necked Stork

While here, we spotted a couple of more raptors - Brahminy Kite and Shikra. Now we had around seven raptors, and wanted to touch at least ten raptors for the day - as you know, when it comes to raptors, birders are greedy.



Black-tailed Godwit

After seeing some Minivets, Hornbills and other birds, we decided to proceed to our next stop which was Nizam Sagar. By now the time was about 1:00PM, and the rats were back, creating havoc inside our stomachs.

Proceeding towards our destination we were scouting for places to get something to eat, but in vain, and finally arrived at our destination. Thanks to Vikramjit Uncle's *upma* and *chutney*, supplemented by some junk food from the canteen there, we were able to regain our energy.

To our surprise there was absolutely no bird activity in the water, so we had to head back empty-handed without any clicks or sightings from that location. On the way back towards Hyderabad, we took the same route we had taken to reach there. As we were crossing Safdulpur Lake, we found a raptor again; this time it was a Marsh Harrier. We were excited as we were getting close to our figure of ten raptors, and we still had hope.

As we crossed Pocharam again, we decided to cover most of the distance without stopping anywhere. Then, 20 kms out of Medak, we spotted two more raptors. Not the finale I expected for our ten-raptor quest, but still they were raptors - Black-winged Kite and Black Kite. As we proceeded further we saw another raptor flying away from us and perching on a tree. The members in the second car identified it as the Oriental Honey Buzzard.



Grey Wagtail

We finally ended our day with almost 110 species, but had a sad feeling that after such an amazing day with the amazing beings called birds, we needed to get back to the concrete jungle and the corporate wildlife of life. Complete list of birds seen:

Short-toed Snake Eagle	Paddyfield Pipit	Cattle Egret
Common Kestrel	Ashy-crowned Sparrowlark	Eurasian Thick-knee
Shikra	Blue Rock Thrush	Purple Heron
Black Kite	Red-vented Bulbul	Indian Pond Heron
Black-winged Kite	Ashy Prinia	Grey Heron
Bonelli's Eagle	Plain Prinia	Black-headed Ibis
Brahminy Kite	Common Kingfisher	Red-naped Ibis
Osprey	Pied Kingfisher	Glossy Ibis
Greater Spotted Eagle	White-throated Kingfisher	Spot-billed Duck
Oriental Honey Buzzard	Asian Koel	Ruddy Shelduck
Eurasian Marsh Harrier	Indian Peafowl	Common Pochard
Blue Rock Pigeon	Eurasian Collared Dove	Bronze-winged Jacana
Large-billed Crow	House Sparrow	Pheasant-tailed Jacana
House Crow	Rose-ringed Parakeet	Eurasian Spoonbill
Spotted Dove	Indian Silverbill	Black-winged Stilt
Laughing Dove	Asian Palm Swift	Cotton Pygmy-goose
Black Drongo	Southern Coucal	Eurasian Wigeon
Green Bee-eater	Pale-billed Flowerpecker	Red-wattled Lapwing
Barn Swallow	Small Minivet	Kentish Plover
Wire-tailed Swallow	Golden-fronted Leafbird	Little Ringed Plover
Common Myna	Grey Francolin	Pacific Golden Plover
Red-rumped Swallow	Common Quail	Greater Flamingo
Indian Roller	Brahminy Starling	Painted Stork
Common Tailorbird	Rosy Starling	Northern Shoveler
Baya Weaver	White-headed Babbler	Lesser Whistling-duck
Purple-rumped Sunbird	Oriental Magpie Robin	Little Cormorant
Large Grey Babbler	Common Sandpiper	Great Cormorant
Common Hoopoe	Wood Sandpiper	Grey-headed Swampphen
Indian Grey Hornbill	River Tern	Common Coot
Indian Robin	Whiskered Tern	Brown-headed Gull
Pied Bushchat	Black-bellied Tern	Black-tailed Godwit
White-browed Wagtail	Bar-headed Goose	Northern Pintail
Yellow Wagtail	Little Egret	Garganey
White Wagtail	Intermediate Egret	Common Redshank
Grey Wagtail	Large Egret	Little Grebe
Woolly-necked Stork		

Bird of the Month

Text and photo: Umesh Mani

Asian Brown Flycatcher (*Muscicapa dauurica*)



Asian Brown Flycatcher (Ankola, Karnataka, 18-03-2012)

Order: Passeriformes
Family: Muscicapidae
Genus: *Muscicapa*
Species: *M. dauurica*
Size: 13 cm

Description & distribution: The Asian Brown Flycatcher is a member of the Muscicapidae family of flycatchers. The length of 13 cm includes the cocked tail, which is relatively longer than the similar-looking but larger Spotted Flycatcher *M. striata*. The upperparts in the adult bird are grey-brown, which become greyer as the plumage ages, and underparts are pale with a light brownish wash on the flanks and breast. The pale lores are fairly extensive, and the large eyes have prominent white 'spectacles'. It has a large, dark bill with a marked pale base to the lower mandible, and the primary projections are shorter (about 80-90% of tertials) than other similar species like the Dark-sided Flycatcher *M. sibirica*. Its black legs help differentiate it from the Brown-breasted Flycatcher *M. muttui*, with which bird it has a range overlap in many places. Juvenile birds have buffish spotting on head and upperparts, whitish underparts with fine dark scaling on breast, and creamy-white wing-bars.

The Asian Brown Flycatcher breeds across Japan, eastern Siberia, northern China and in the Himalayan foothills and the hills of central and western India. It is migratory, wintering in tropical southern Asia, from southern India and Sri Lanka eastwards to Bangladesh and Indonesia. Besides, there are several vagrant reports from Britain, Ireland, Norway, Denmark

and Sweden. Some literature designates the Asian Brown Flycatcher by the scientific name *M. latirostris*. It is generally regarded as monotypic, but Rasmussen and Anderton have presented the view that the populations seen in the Indian sub-continent and the Andamans are paler and browner above, have a deeper bill with a mostly pale lower mandible, less contrasting eye-ring, and a more mottled throat, breast and flanks; they describe this sub-species as *M. d. poonensis*.

Habitat & behaviour: The Asian Brown Flycatcher is commonly seen in temperate and sub-alpine open broad-leaved woodland forests, plantations, groves and near cultivated areas. Usually seen singly, it tends to sit on exposed perches, preferably near streams, and makes short aerial sallies to capture insects in the air before repeatedly returning to the same perch. It also occasionally picks up caterpillars and may even consume fruit and berries. During courtship, it sings a simple melodic song comprising short trills interspersed with whistling phrases; the usual call is a weak *sit-it-it-it*.

Nesting: The Asian Brown Flycatcher breeds from April to June. The nest is a compact cup of moss lined with lichen, feathers and fibres, usually built on a bare thick branch. The usual clutch is four eggs, incubated by the female who is fed by the male.

Local name: The Asian Brown Flycatcher is known as '*jhakki*' in Hindi, '*tavittupakshi*' in Malayalam, '*badami makhimar*' in Gujarati, and '*bhuri tik tiki*' in Punjabi.

SIGHTING OF THE FERRUGINOUS POCHARD (*Aythya nyroca*) **DURING THE AWC COUNTS - JANUARY 2016**

Srikanth Bhamidipati, Lawrence Mathappan, Hemant Kumar & Humayun Taher

The White-eyed or Ferruginous Pochard (*Aythya nyroca*), also known as the Ferruginous Duck, is a medium-sized diving duck found in the Eurasian region. Very distinctively-coloured, the adult male is a rich chestnut colour with a darker back and a glaring yellow-white eye. The white underbelly and pure white undertail helps to distinguish this species from the somewhat similar Tufted Duck. The female is similar to the male, but somewhat duller, and with a dark eye. Juveniles are similar but

the belly and undertail is grey-buff. In flight, a broad white wingbar extends onto the outer primaries. It is easily distinguished from other similar ducks by the white undertail when sitting and the extensive wingbar in flight. They are gregarious birds, forming large flocks in winter, often along with other diving species such as the Tufted Duck and the Common Pochard.



Ferruginous Pochard (Photo: Hemant Kumar)

During the course of the Annual Waterfowl Census counts for 2016 in the state of Telangana, Srikanth, Lawrence and Hemant sighted 5 Ferruginous Pochards in a small tank close to a main road. The tank in which the birds were sighted was about 1 metre deep, with a good growth of water-lilies and other aquatic plants. The birds were observed as staying in a more open part of the tank, where the water-lily leaves were somewhat thinner. Although the Ferruginous Pochard is described as being somewhat shy, the team was able to observe that such was not always the case - the birds appeared to be quite at ease in this place, although the level of disturbance was high, due to the proximity of the tank to the main arterial highway. It was also noted that the birds appeared to associate with other species (Cotton Pygmy Goose, Comb Duck, Northern Pintail, Gadwall and Indian Spot-billed Duck). This is interesting in that although the birds are said to associate with other diving ducks, their

association with dabbling ducks is not anywhere mentioned.

Going by extant historical records and references, it seems quite probable that the Ferruginous Pochard, though not unknown from our region, remains a rarely seen and unusual visitor to the state. Old records notwithstanding, it is clear that there is not sufficient data available from recent times, to make even a reasonable estimate of current probable wintering populations in either Andhra Pradesh or Telangana States. Also given its current status of Near-Threatened/Declining in the IUCN Red Data List, it is perhaps a good time to make a plea to all naturalists and birdwatchers to keep an eye open for these birds and to write in with any sightings that may be made. Historical sightings, I may mention, would be equally as interesting to us as any current sightings.

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For information, write to: Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh, PO Box 45, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad – 500034. **E-group:** http://groups.google.co.in/group/bsap_online. **Website:** www.bsap.in. **Society membership** (in Rs.): Annual: 500 per annum; Student: 200 per annum; Corporate: 2000 per annum; Life: 3000. (Add Rs 75 for outstation cheques.)

MOUNTAIN MAGIC

Trip Report – Sattal & Pangot, Uttarakhand, April 2015

Umesh Mani



Tawny Fish Owl (Photo: Sudhir Moorti)

Four of us – Sudhir Moorti, Anita Negi, Gowthama Poladasu and I – were scheduled to go on a trip to Kerala in mid-April 2015. However, given that intense heat and humidity was expected – a major deterrent – we had been casting about in our minds for an alternate location, when we hit upon Sattal and Pangot. The prospect of cold weather was so alluring that within a few minutes, we had all agreed, and within just a couple of hours, the new program was made, tickets booked, car hire worked out, and we had started upon the task of boning up on the birds of the region!

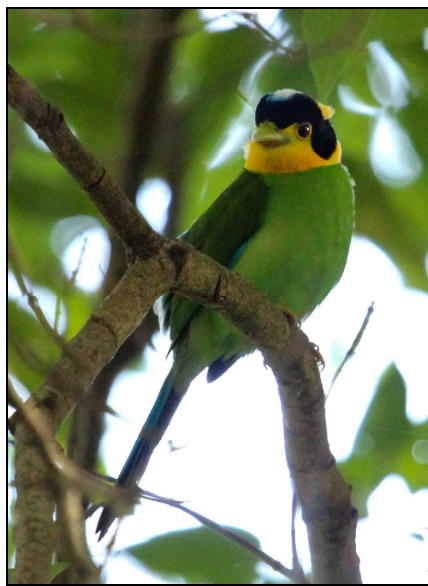
Looking back, the decision to go to Sattal and Pangot turned out to be one of the best decisions we have ever made. The region is a birder's paradise, with a checklist of some 300+ species, including several pheasants, thrushes, flycatchers, songbirds, vultures, etc.



Red-billed Leiothrix (Photo: Gowthama Poladasu)



Bank Myna (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Long-tailed Broadbill (Photo: Sudhir Moorti)



Red-billed Blue Magpie (Photo: Sudhir Moorti)

The duration of our trip was around 6 days, and hopes were high that we would be able to see and photograph a good number of that 300+ checklist.

Opinions were divided as to whether we should stay for a few days each at Sattal as well as Pangot, or base ourselves at Sattal and just drive to Pangot on the days earmarked for that region. We decided to take a call on that after reaching Sattal.

As we had hired a car at Delhi and were driving ourselves, we had full freedom and flexibility to stop wherever and whenever we felt like it; this resulted in frequent birding stops en route to Sattal, yielding several lifers like the Bank Myna, River Lapwing, Brown Rock Chat, etc, though also delaying us by several hours! But anyway, since the sightings had been interesting, we were quite happy.

The accommodation we had fixed up was located somewhere between Sattal and Bhimtal. This worked out to our advantage, since there was plenty of bird life all around – including Green-backed Tits, Himalayan



Green-backed Tit (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Russet Sparrow (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Streaked Laughingthrush (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Bulbuls, Oriental Turtle Doves, etc that could be seen on the bushes even through our windows! On the nearby trees, we also saw the Red-billed Blue Magpies; Blue Whistling Thrushes were everywhere, as also House and Russet Sparrows, Grey Bushchats, Grey-hooded Babbler, Streaked Laughingthrushes etc.



Black-throated Sunbird (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Blue-winged Siva (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Rufous-bellied Niltava (Photo: Umesh Mani)

helpful to listen to and get familiar with the bird calls before the trip, since that could help locate and identify additional species.

Birding along the streams can also be quite profitable – we scored the Slaty-backed and Spotted Forktails, Crested Kingfisher, Brown Dipper, Plumbeous and White-capped Water Redstarts near various streams.

Birding further up at Pangot was more challenging, but also a rewarding experience. Due to the

Over the next few days, we covered various trails and birding sites near Sattal, including Maheshkhan Forest (where we saw the Rufous-bellied Niltava, Black-headed and Eurasian Jays, and the White-throated Laughingthrush), Dumping Yard (where we saw Himalayan and Eurasian Griffons, and the Steppe Eagle), etc.

But the most incredible experience was at a spot known locally as the Studio, where some logs and twigs across and near a small stream provide birds with convenient perches before they take a dip in the water. At this spot, we were able to see and photograph many beautiful species, including the Mountain Bulbul, Red-billed Leiothrix, Blue-winged Siva, Emerald Dove, and several Flycatchers (Rusty-tailed, Blue-throated, Verditer, Ultramarine, Grey-headed Canary, Asian Paradise and White-throated Fantail). The nearby forest yielded the stunning Long-tailed Broadbill, Maroon Oriole, Brown Bullfinch, Grey-bellied Tesia, Pied and Tickell's Thrushes, Slaty-headed Parakeets, etc.

Some species seem to be seen in fairly restricted patches, e.g. Black-chinned Babbler, Black-throated Sunbird, Striated Prinia, etc - so it is a good idea to use a local guide, since only they would be able to take us to those spots. It is also



Black-headed Jay (Photo: Gowthama Poladasu)



Eurasian Jay (Photo: Umesh Mani)



White-throated Laughingthrush (Photo: Umesh Mani)



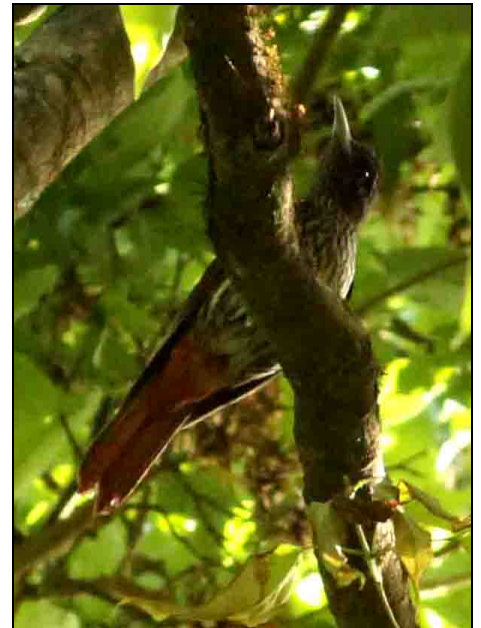
Crimson Sunbird (Photo: Gowthama Poladasu)

steep inclines, one has to stick to the road while birding. This can be frustrating at times, if the bird activity is on the 'hill' side of the road, since the trees would then be quite high and sighting birds would be difficult. But on the other side – the 'valley' side – of the road, the trees would be at eye level, and birding would be a lot easier. We spent a lot of time praying that the activity would be on this side of the road!

Pangot has some of the most exotic and enigmatic species, like the Kalij and Koklass Pheasants, Hill Partridge, etc, as well as many other lovely species like the Coal, Fire-capped and Black-lored Tits, White-browed Shrike babbler, White-tailed Nuthatch, Great and Blue-throated Barbets, Whiskered Yuhina, etc.



Whiskered Yuhina (Photo: Gowthama Poladasu)



Maroon Oriole (Photo: Gowthama Poladasu)



White-browed Shrike Babbler
(Photo: Umesh Mani)



Slaty-headed Parakeet
(Photo: Umesh Mani)



Striated Prinia (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Pied Thrush (Photo: Gowthama Poladasu)



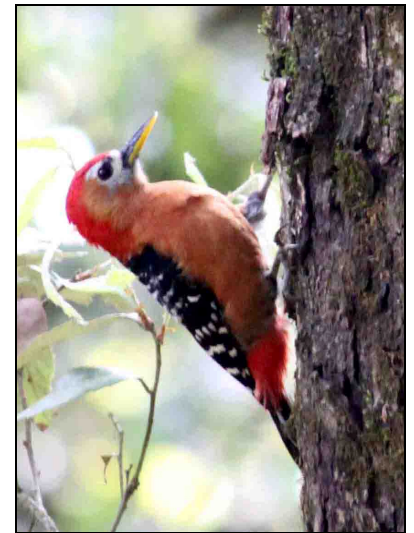
Rusty-tailed Flycatcher (Photo: Gowthama Poladasu)



Blue-throated Flycatcher (Photo: Sudhir Moorti)

Vinayak (further up from Pangot) is said to be the place to see the Cheer Pheasant (though we spent two mornings there but were not able to see it). However, we did have some compensation in the form of the Mistle Thrush, Rosy and Upland Pipits, etc.

The trip also yielded a bonanza in terms of Woodpeckers (Himalayan, Rufous-bellied,



Rufous-bellied Woodpecker
(Photo: Gowthama Poladasu)

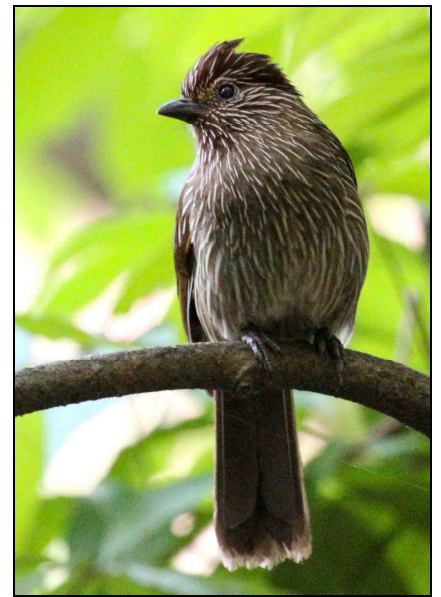
Brown-fronted, Fulvous-breasted, Greater Yellownape, Greater Flameback and Grey-headed), Owls (Tawny and Brown Fish Owls, Spotted and Asian Barred Owllet), Thrushes (Blue Rock, Chestnut-bellied Rock, Blue-capped Rock, Dark-sided and Orange-headed, beside those already mentioned above) and Warblers (Tickell's and Hume's Leaf, Lemon-rumped, Common Chiffchaff, Whistler's, Greenish, Black-faced, Western Crowned, Golden-spectacled and Pale-footed, besides the Grey-hooded mentioned already).



Mountain Bulbul (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Mistle Thrush (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Striated Laughingthrush
(Photo: Sudhir Moorti)

In sum, we returned with 175 species, including 75+ lifers for me personally (some of the other members had nearly 100 lifers!). All in all, a wonderful experience, leaving us desperately wishing for more!

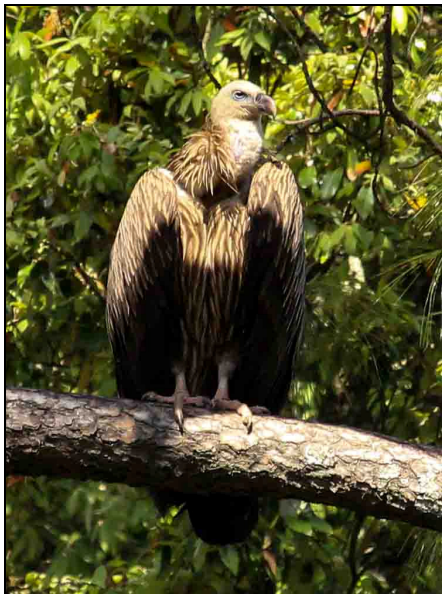
Some more photos taken during the trip:



Spotted Forktail (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Slaty-backed Forktail (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Himalayan Griffon (Photo: Sudhir Moorti)



Dark-sided Flycatcher (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Grey Bushchat (Photo: Umesh Mani)



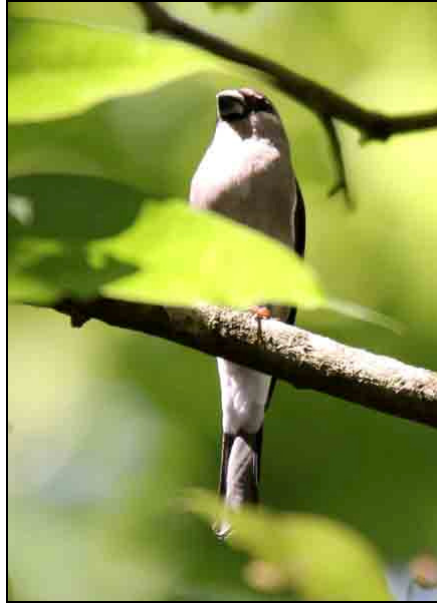
Emerald Dove (Photo: Umesh Mani)



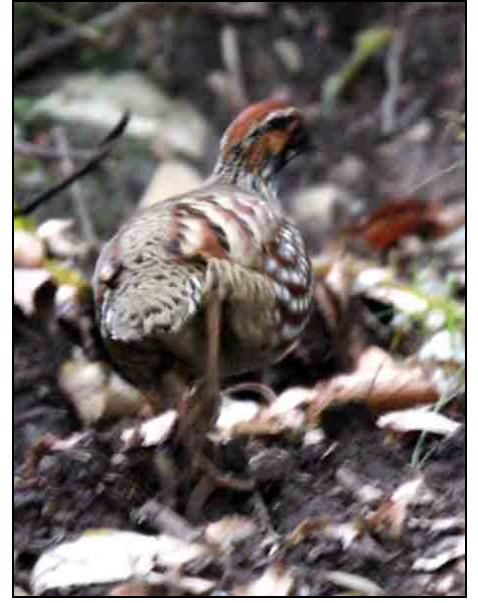
Common Chiffchaff (Photo: Sudhir Moorti)



Steppe Eagle (Photo: Sudhir Moorti)



Brown Bullfinch (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Hill Partridge (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Tickell's Thrush (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Tawny Eagle (Photo: Gowthama Poladasu)



Brown Rock Chat (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Asian Barred Owlet (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Himalayan Bulbul (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Black Bulbul (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon (Photo: Umesh Mani)



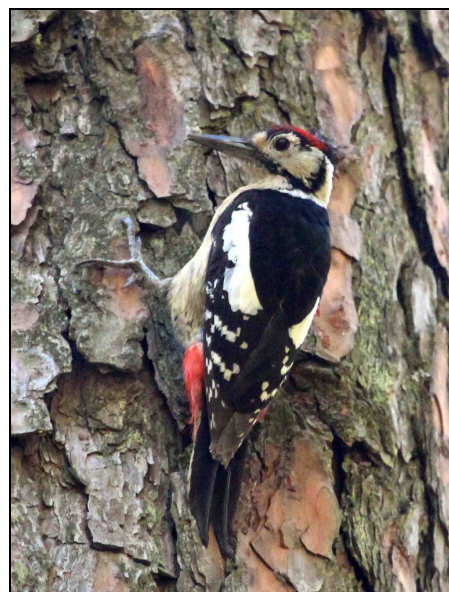
Grey Treepie (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Bar-tailed Treecreeper
(Photo: Gowthama Poladasu)



Himalayan Woodpecker (Photo: Sudhir Moorti)



River Lapwing (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Ultramarine Flycatcher (Male) (Photo: Sudhir Moorti)



Ultramarine Flycatcher (Female) (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Great Barbet (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Black-faced Warbler (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Spot-winged Tit (Photo: Umesh Mani)



White-tailed Nuthatch (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Black-lored Tit (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Black-throated Tit (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Blue Whistling Thrush (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Kalij Pheasant (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Tickell's Leaf Warbler (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Rufous Sibia (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Plumbeous Water Redstart (Male) (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Plumbeous Water Redstart (Female) (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Western Crowned Warbler (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Eurasian Griffon (Photo: Umesh Mani)



House Sparrow (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Grey-hooded Warbler (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Verditer Flycatcher (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Oriental Turtle Dove (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Complete list of birds seen during the trip:

S. No.	Bird Name	S. No.	Bird Name
1	River Lapwing	29	Dark-sided Thrush
2	Red-wattled Lapwing	30	Pied Thrush
3	Brown Rockchat	31	Mistle Thrush
4	Pied Bushchat	32	Tickell's Thrush
5	Grey Bushchat	33	Blue Whistling Thrush
6	Common Stonechat	34	Orange-headed Thrush (nominate)
7	Red-billed Blue Magpie	35	Striated Laughingthrush
8	Oriental Magpie Robin	36	Streaked Laughingthrush
9	Maroon Oriole	37	Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush
10	Black-hooded Oriole	38	White-throated Laughingthrush
11	Spotted Dove	39	Grey-winged Blackbird
12	Emerald Dove	40	White-browed Shrike Babbler
13	Oriental Turtle Dove	41	Large Cuckooshrike
14	Eurasian Collared Dove	42	Black-winged Cuckooshrike
15	Blue Rock Pigeon	43	Bar-winged Flycatcher-shrike
16	Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon	44	Jungle Babbler
17	Yellow-footed Green Pigeon	45	Yellow-eyed Babbler
18	Rose-ringed Parakeet	46	Black-chinned Babbler
19	Slaty-headed Parakeet	47	Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler
20	Plum-headed Parakeet	48	Red-billed Leothrix
21	Jungle Myna	49	Rufous Sibia
22	Common Myna	50	Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch
23	Bank Myna	51	White-tailed Nuthatch
24	Chestnut-tailed Starling	52	Bar-tailed Treecreeper
25	Asian Pied Starling	53	Spotted Forktail
26	Blue Rock Thrush	54	Slaty-backed Forktail
27	Chestnut-bellied Rock Thrush	55	Plumbeous Water Redstart
28	Blue-capped Rock Thrush	56	White-capped Water Redstart

S. No.	Bird Name	S. No.	Bird Name
57	Brown Dipper	101	Changeable Hawk Eagle
58	Asian Brown Flycatcher	102	Black Eagle
59	Rusty-tailed Flycatcher	103	Crested Serpent Eagle
60	Dark-sided Flycatcher	104	Shikra
61	Asian Paradise-flycatcher	105	Besra
62	White-throated Fantail	106	Black Kite
63	Ultramarine Flycatcher	107	Black-shouldered Kite
64	Verditer Flycatcher	108	Large-billed Crow
65	Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher	109	Indian Jungle Crow
66	Rufous-bellied Niltava	110	Black-headed Jay
67	Red-vented Bulbul	111	Eurasian Jay
68	Himalayan Bulbul	112	Himalayan Woodpecker
69	Mountain Bulbul	113	Rufous-bellied Woodpecker
70	Black Bulbul	114	Greater Yellownap
71	Rufous Treepie	115	Greater Flameback
72	Grey Treepie	116	Brown-fronted Woodpecker
73	Olive-backed Pipit	117	Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker
74	Upland Pipit	118	Grey-headed Woodpecker
75	Rosy Pipit	119	Common Rosefinch
76	Paddyfied Pipit	120	Brown Bullfinch
77	Blue-winged Siva	121	Eurasian / Common Cuckoo
78	Purple Sunbird	122	Asian Koel
79	Crimson Sunbird	123	Long-tailed Broadbill
80	Black-throated Sunbird	124	Green Sandpiper
81	Great Tit	125	Common Sandpiper
82	Green-backed Tit	126	Great Barbet
83	Black-throated Tit	127	Blue-throated Barbet
84	Spot-winged Tit	128	Coppersmith Barbet
85	Fire-capped Tit	129	Scarlet Minivet
86	Black-lored Tit (nominate)	130	Long-tailed Minivet
87	White-browed Wagtail	131	Oriental White-eye
88	Grey Wagtail	132	Hill Partridge
89	Barn Swallow	133	Black Francolin
90	Red-rumped Swallow	134	Kalij Pheasant
91	Little Swift	135	Koklass Pheasant
92	House Swift	136	Indian Roller
93	Tawny Fish Owl	137	Dollarbird
94	Brown Fish Owl	138	Ruddy Shelduck
95	Asian Barred Owlet	139	House Sparrow
96	Spotted Owlet	140	Russet Sparrow
97	Himalayan Griffon	141	Chestnut-shouldered Petronia
98	Eurasian Griffon	142	Tickell's Leaf Warbler
99	Steppe Eagle	143	Lemon-rumped Warbler
100	Booted Eagle	144	Common Chiffchaff

S. No.	Bird Name	S. No.	Bird Name
145	Whistler's Warbler	160	House Crow
146	Hume's Leaf Warbler	161	Whiskered Yuhina
147	Greenish Warbler	162	Drongo Cuckoo
148	Black-faced Warbler	163	Black Drongo
149	Western Crowned Warbler	164	Ashy Drongo
150	Grey-hooded Warbler	165	Bronzed Drongo
151	Green Crowned Warbler (Golden-spectacled Warbler)	166	Greater Racket-tailed Drongo
		167	Large-tailed Nightjar
152	Pale-footed Bush Warbler	168	Indian Grey Hornbill
153	Grey-bellied Tesia	169	Green Bee-eater
154	Lesser Whitethroat	170	Orange-bellied Leafbird
155	Striated Prinia	171	Cattle Egret
156	Ashy Prinia	172	Little Egret
157	White-throated Kingfisher	173	Intermediate Egret
158	Common Kingfisher	174	Little Cormorant
159	Crested Kingfisher	175	Common Hawk Cuckoo

* * *

For Private Circulation Only

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For information, write to: Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh, PO Box 45, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad – 500034. **E-group:** http://groups.google.co.in/group/bsap_online. **Website:** www.bsap.in. **Society membership** (in Rs.): Annual: 500 per annum; Student: 200 per annum; Corporate: 2000 per annum; Life: 3000. (Add Rs 75 for outstation cheques.)



Newsletter of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh
New Series Volume 13 Number 4 April 2016

FIELD OUTING: Sunday, 17th April 2016: Ameenpur. Meeting point: Punjagutta (opp. Mangatrai Pearls), 6.00AM.

Alongside the other interesting species reported every now and then from Ameenpur are the flamingos. This would be a full-day trip. Carry water and lunch. For further details and to co-ordinate, please contact Ms Surekha Aitabathula (99490-38532).

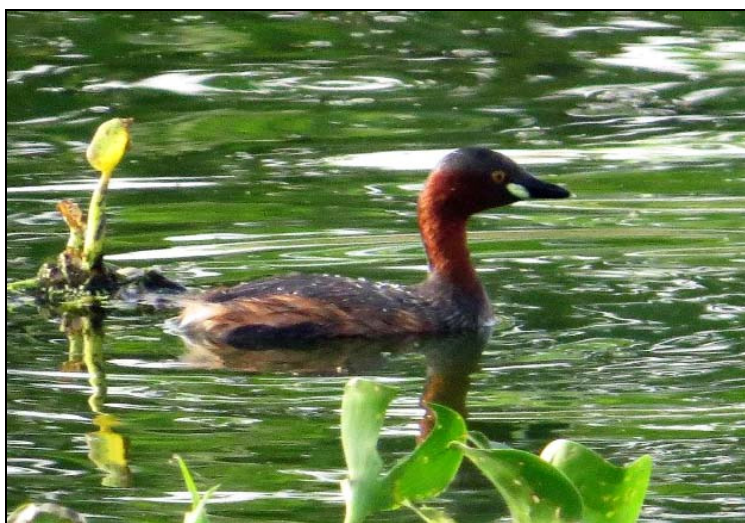
INDOOR MEETING: Talk by Vivek and Shashidhar of Great Hyderabad Adventure Club.

Monday, 4th April 2016, 6.00PM: Goethe-zentrum Hyderabad, 20 Journalist's Colony, Road No. 3, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad – 500 034. (For directions, please contact 94905-09251 or 040-65526443/23350040)

Among GHAC's many adventure activities are rock climbing, river rafting, hiking, etc. One such activity last year was a hike in the exotic Chikmagalur hills in Karnataka. GHAC members Vivek and Shashidhar went through the challenging experience of being lost in the jungle for 55 hours before being rescued. The duo will share their experiences, and describe how they survived for more than two days and two nights in the thick and hostile jungle.

UNPLANNED TRIPS CAN BE INTERESTING **Trip Report – Vennelagadda Lake, March 20, 2016**

Text and photos: Humayun Taher



Little Grebe

The new scope had just arrived and I was pardonably anxious to test it out in the field. A few phone calls, and Lawrence suggested I should come over; we could then visit the Vennelagadda Lake that lies just behind his house. The more I contemplated this idea, the better I liked it. The lake should have a smattering of waterfowl still on it and, in fact, Lawrence told me that there was a considerable amount of bird life in the area that should be interesting. So I decided that I couldn't ask for a better place to test out the scope. As it turned out, we got a lot more than we bargained for. And certainly, if an area can give us a list of 49 species in just

about ninety minutes of birding, there is a lot to be said in favour of the place.

So, having reached Lawrence's house on the morning of the 20th March, the two of us started proceedings with a cup of steaming *chai* and then set off for the lake. It's only about five minutes drive from his house and, having proceeded along the bund until we reached a small flat promontory overlooking the lake, we stopped the car, got out and started the serious business of seeing what there was to be seen.

The first thing that struck me was the extraordinary amount of pollution of this little lake. The usual mess of plastic bags crammed with unsavoury rubbish, garbage littering the shores and the water giving off an unpleasant odour; I couldn't help wondering why it is that people are so unconscious of their surroundings.

There was a large dustbin set up not very far from this lake... is it too much to ask people to walk just a few additional steps and put their garbage where it is meant to be put, instead of just throwing it into the water? And then these are the same people who will moan about the stench and wonder why the government is not doing anything about it.



Garganey

But it seems that the birds like this place; or is it that they simply have nowhere else to go...? Whatever the reason, they were there in decent numbers. A large raft of ducks was on the lake. We scanned this and found that the bulk of the raft seemed to consist of the Northern Shovelers. There were over 150 of these birds in the raft, interspersed with a goodly number of Garganey, Lesser Whistling-ducks and Spot-billed Ducks.



Common Snipe

Lawrence made out the presence of a solitary Common Snipe perched in the midst of a hyacinth bed. There were distinctly few waders about, but that is not to be wondered at because, the drought notwithstanding, there was a fair amount of water at the lake and from where we are standing,

it seemed to be quite deep (certainly not less than a foot of water). Add the fact that the majority of the waders would long ago have "gone north", and it is not surprising that we only had one Common Snipe and about five Wood Sandpipers in the list of migrants, while a few Black-winged Stilts and Red-wattled Lapwings represented the residents. The larger waders however, were present in some numbers.

A fairly large flock of Egrets and Pond Herons, accompanied by a few Glossy Ibis and a couple of Grey Herons were the representatives of this order. Little Grebes, Common and Purple Moorhens and Common Coots were present in fair numbers.



Glossy Ibis

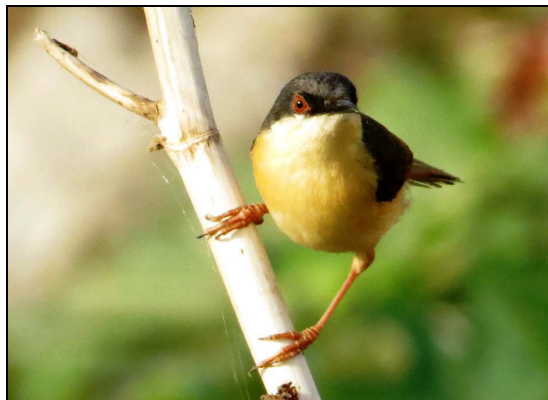
I suppose that the presence of the Coots is a good indication of the degradation of the waters of this lake, but really is there any water-body these days within city limits that is free of degradation? It seemed a bit of a mixed blessing actually: If the lake had contained potable water, it would have rapidly been drained to supply the precious fluid; whereas if it is merely being used as a convenient dump-yard, the water is not only unsuitable for consumption, it rapidly becomes an odoriferous swamp that is both unsavoury and unhealthy.

Interestingly, there were a considerable number of other woodland birds around too. The promontory where we were standing had a few *prosopis* bushes around and these were attracting the Yellow-billed Babblers, Ashy Prinias, Pied and Brahminy Starlings and a large flock of Rosy Starlings.

I also spotted a solitary Greenish Warbler hopping about in the bushes very close to us. A pair of Indian Robins seemed to have a nest hidden somewhere and were loth to tell us where. A large fruiting *ficus* tree nearby gave us sightings of some Coppersmith Barbets, Red-vented Bulbuls and two Black Drongos.

We were just complaining about the lack of raptors when a splendid Black-winged Kite flapped lazily overhead and alighted on a nearby telegraph pole. We swivelled the spotting scope onto the bird and were delighted at the crisp colours and excellent clarity of the brand new optics. Clearly, this field test had been very successful indeed.

The morning was beginning to get uncomfortably hot now and it was time to retreat. So, with many a backward glance at this pleasant spot, we retired to the solace of more hot tea and back to the daily grind, refreshed by our morning spent with the feathered beings and thankful that, the pollution notwithstanding, such tiny little oases still exist in the concrete jungle of the city. How long the birds agree with us however, is open to conjecture!



Ashy Prinia

A complete list of the birds seen on this trip is given below:

Sl. No.	Common Name	Scientific Name	Sl. No.	Common Name	Scientific Name
1	Lesser Whistling Duck	Dendrocygna javanica	26	Spotted Dove	Streptopelia chinensis
2	Indian Spot-billed Duck	Anas poecilorhyncha	27	Greater Coucal	Centropus sinensis
3	Northern Shoveler	Anas clypeata	28	Little Swift	Apus affinis
4	Garganey	Anas querquedula	29	White-throated Kingfisher	Halcyon smyrnensis
5	Little Grebe	Tachybaptus ruficollis	30	Green Bee-eater	Merops orientalis
6	Great Cormorant	Phalacrocorax carbo	31	Coppersmith Barbet	Psilopogon haemacephalus
7	Little Cormorant	Phalacrocorax niger	32	Black Drongo	Dicrurus macrocercus
8	Grey Heron	Ardea cinerea	33	House Crow	Corvus splendens
9	Little Egret	Egretta garzetta	34	Barn Swallow	Hirundo rustica
10	Eastern Cattle Egret	Bubulcus ibis	35	Red-rumped Swallow	Cecropis daurica
11	Indian Pond-Heron	Ardeola grayii	36	Red-vented Bulbul	Pycnonotus cafer
12	Glossy Ibis	Plegadis falcinellus	37	Greenish Warbler	Phylloscopus trochiloides
13	Black-winged Kite	Elanus caeruleus	38	Ashy Prinia	Prinia socialis
14	Black Kite	Milvus migrans	39	Yellow-billed Babbler	Turdoides affinis
15	Grey-headed Swamphen	Porphyrio poliocephalus	40	Indian Robin	Copsychus fulicatus
16	Eurasian Moorhen	Gallinula chloropus	41	Pied Bushchat	Saxicola caprata
17	Eurasian Coot	Fulica atra	42	Rosy Starling	Pastor roseus
18	Black-winged Stilt	Himantopus himantopus	43	Asian Pied Starling	Gracupica contra
19	Red-wattled Lapwing	Vanellus indicus	44	Brahminy Starling	Sturnia pagodarum
20	Pheasant-tailed Jacana	Hydrophasianus chirurgus	45	Purple Sunbird	Cinnyris asiaticus
21	Bronze-winged Jacana	Metopidius indicus	46	Western Yellow Wagtail	Motacilla flava
22	Wood Sandpiper	Tringa glareola	47	White-browed Wagtail	Motacilla maderaspatensis
23	Common Snipe	Gallinago gallinago	48	House Sparrow	Passer domesticus
24	River Tern	Sterna aurantia	49	Indian Silverbill	Lonchura malabarica
25	Rock (Feral) Pigeon	Columba livia			

* * *

Bird of the Month

Text and photo: Umesh Mani

Eurasian Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*)



Eurasian Oystercatcher (Pulicat, 09-05-2015)

Order: Charadriiformes
Family: Haematopodidae
Genus: *Haematopus*
Species: *H. ostralegus*
Size: 40-45cm

Description & distribution: One of the largest waders in the region, the Eurasian Oystercatcher is also the most widespread of the oystercatchers, with three races distributed and/or breeding across Western and Central Europe, many parts of Asia including the Russian far-east and China, and the Indian sub-continent. Historically known as the 'sea pie', it is very easy to recognize, with a black-and-white plumage, red legs and a strong, 8-9cm-long red bill which is useful in locating earthworms and breaking open molluscs and other shellfish. The bill shape can vary, with the billtips being either broad or pointed. In flight, the bird is unmistakable; the underparts are white, while the black upperparts have white patches on wings and tail. Juvenile birds are browner, and have a white neck-collar and a duller bill.

Three subspecies are described: the nominate *H. ostralegus*, found in Europe; *H. o. longipes*, found in Central Asia and Russia; and *H. o. osculans*, found in Kamchatka (in the Russian Far East) and northern China. The main difference is in the bill length, which increases from west to east. The upperparts in *H. o. longipes* are browner, and the nasal groove extends more than halfway along the bill, whereas in *H. o. ostralegus*, the nasal groove stops short of the half-way mark. *H. o. osculans* lacks white on the shafts of the outer 2–3 primaries, and the outer webs of the outer five primaries have no white.

Habitat & behaviour: The Eurasian Oystercatcher is commonly seen in mudflats in estuaries, salt marshes, on rocky, sandy or muddy shores, and along the banks of rivers and lakes. It shows (at least local) migratory movements over most of its range. The

European population, which breeds mainly in northern Europe, moves to northern Africa and southern Europe in winter. Asian populations, and those in Ireland, Great Britain and the adjacent European coasts, also exhibit local migratory movement southwards in winter. Outside the breeding season, the birds are highly gregarious, forming flocks numbering up to a hundred.

Its large numbers and well-known behavior make the Eurasian Oystercatcher an important and reliable indicator species for the health of the ecosystems where it congregates.

Its usual call is a loud, clear piping *pic-pic-pic*; it also occasionally emits a high *peep*. Its diet consists mainly of crabs; bivalves (mussels, clams), snails and other shellfish; earthworms; and other aquatic insects. Contrary to its name, it does not particularly prefer oysters (although it is one of the few wader species that are capable of opening them).

Interestingly, all oystercatchers don't adopt one standard manner of using their bills – birds with broad bill tips prise open or hammer through the shell of molluscs, whereas birds with finer bill tips tend to prefer digging up worms for food. The choice of technique may partly be due to wear-and-tear of the bill, but is more often an individual preference learnt from the parents.

Nesting: The Eurasian Oystercatcher breeds from April to July. The nest is a shallow scrape amid pebbles, on the coast or on inland gravelly islands. The usual clutch consists of 2–4 brown-spotted cream eggs. It usually produces only one brood per season, but may replace the eggs if lost.

Local name: The Eurasian Oystercatcher is known as '*darya gajpaon*' in Hindi, '*yerra kali ulanka*' in Telugu, and '*ghoga khor*' in Punjabi.

* * *

**Some observations on the changes in the Breeding Season
of the Indian Courser (*Cursorius coromandelicus*) in Telangana State**

Humayun Taher

The Indian Courser (*Cursorius coromandelicus*) is a species of courser found in mainland South Asia, mainly in the plains bounded by the Ganges and Indus river system. Like other coursers, it is a ground bird that can be found in small groups as they forage for insects in dry open semi-desert country. The species occurs in dry stony, scrubby or rocky country (but rarely on sandy terrain) from the Indus valley east of Bangladesh and south to the tip of Peninsular India. Other areas where they are commonly seen include the Deccan plateau and the arid regions of north-western India in Rajasthan and Gujarat. It is resident in some areas but makes local movements.

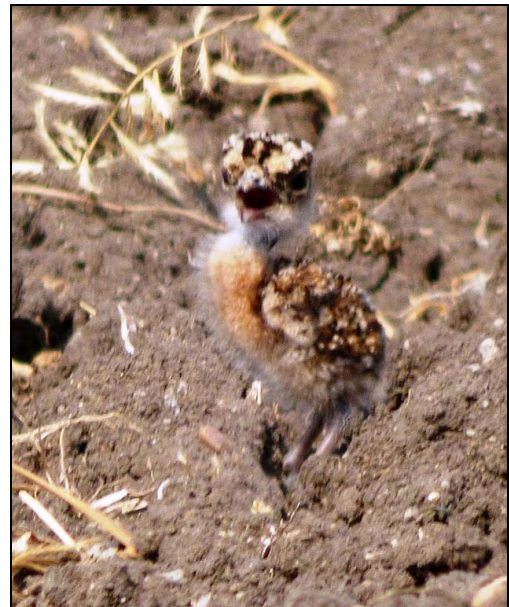
The area under discussions, where I have made detailed observations is the ICRISAT Center (17°31'05.1"N 78°16'45.2"E), at Patancheru, Hyderabad. This place has good habitat which is conducive to the Indian Courser and they are frequently observed here. As far as breeding records are concerned, my field notes show the following records:

- 1) 19th January 2014: Three adult birds were seen. One bird was observed crouching in a furrow in a ploughed field and the posture and behavior was suggestive of the bird either incubating eggs or shielding a chick. Another adult was standing alertly just behind this first one. We did not want to disturb the birds too much so we did not investigate this in greater detail. The birds were very nervous and as soon as the car door was opened, the crouching bird crouched down still further while the standing bird started calling in alarm. So we remained inside the vehicle and, for the 15 minutes that we stood there, the crouching bird did not get up.



Indian Courser adult crouching (Photo: Humayun Taher)

- 2) 1st February 2015: We saw a pair of Indian Coursers in a similar situation. However, this time the birds were accompanied by two small chicks (which did not appear to be more than a couple of days old, as they were still unsteady on their feet). Again, bearing in mind the vulnerability of the young birds, we refrained from close approach and moved away as soon as the adults started to show signs of uneasiness. Although photographs were taken by my companions, I was unable to get a photograph of the adults with the chicks. But I was very interested to note the date, which was remarkably close to the observation made in 2014.



Indian Courser chick in down
(Photo: Lawrence Mathappan)

- 3) 26th January 2016: I saw a pair of Indian Coursers accompanied by a young bird that did not appear to be more than about three to four weeks old. The February 2015 record of a chick in down is from *this very same field*, so to see a more grown-up juvenile in January was extremely interesting.



Indian Courser young with adult (Photo: Humayun Taher)

Apart from these records from ICRISAT, I have further records from the outskirts of Bidar town, where we had seen several juvenile, but fully fledged, Indian Coursers on 13th September 2014.



Indian Courser fully-fledged juvenile
(Photo: Humayun Taher)

Now, the breeding season of the Indian Coursers, as mentioned in the Handbook is "... overall March to August, the most favoured months varying locally; in Ceylon mainly May." (Ali & Ripley, 1989). This prompted me to go deeper into the subject; and Wikipedia had this to say: "They breed mainly from March to August. Records exist from mid-May in southern India and Sri Lanka and mid-April in Darbhanga". (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_courser). Jerdon mentions that "It breeds on a hollow in the ground, from March to May..." (Jerdon, 1864). In none of the references I have checked are the months of January/February mentioned. This raises an interesting question: whether this is normal breeding season in Southern

India, or whether this constitutes a change in the breeding season dependent on extraneous conditions.

My friend Amritha Lawrence (pers. comm. vide message dated 21-4-2015) had sent me a photograph showing a pair of Indian Coursers in mating posture. This photograph was taken on 19th April 2015, at Ananthagiri Hills, around 50 km. from Hyderabad city.



Indian Courser mating pair
(Photo: Santosh Attreya)

Srikanth B (pers. comm. vide email dated 24-3-2016) had sent me a photograph showing a pair of Indian Coursers with a chick that appears to be about a week to ten days old.



Indian Courser chick with adults
(Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati)

This photograph was taken on 23rd April 2016, at Gandipet Lake, just on the outskirts of Hyderabad city (17°22'34.8"N 78°18'10.1"E).

When all these points are tabulated, we see something like this:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
IN	CD	CD	MB					JU			
CP		Known Breeding Season									

IN = Probable Incubating; CD = Chick in Down; CP = Chick in Plumage; JU = Juvenile birds; MB = Mating observed

The interesting fact is that almost all my records seem to be somewhat outside the known breeding season of the species. This being the case, the following questions arise:

- 1) Whether the breeding season of the species is different in southern India.
- 2) Whether external conditions have altered the breeding season of the species.
- 3) Whether multiple broods are raised where habitat and food sources allow it.

Obviously, the current observations are too cursory to base any conclusions on. What is apparent is that a lot more observations are required on the species to see if the answers to any of these above questions can be at least attempted. And I would sincerely urge our members to write in to me with their observations. I would be keenly interested to see if we can build a more complete picture on the breeding season of the Indian Courser in this part of the country.

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- 2) Jerdon, TC (1864). *The Birds of India. Volume 3*. George Wyman & Co., Calcutta. pp. 626–627
- 3) Taher, Humayun, Bindu Madhavi Racherla, Sharada Annamaraju & M Lawrence, 2015. Variations in the breeding season of the Indian Courser. *Pitta New Series* 12 (3): 5.
- 4) Taher, Humayun, Bindu Madhavi Racherla, Sharada Annamaraju, M Lawrence & Amritha Lawrence, 2015. Variations in the breeding season of the Indian Courser. *Pitta New Series* 12 (5): 5.

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For Private Circulation Only

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Newsletter of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh
New Series Volume 13 Number 5 May 2016

FIELD OUTING: Monday, 16th May 2016: Nehru Zoological Park, 6.30AM.

Established in October 1959 and opened to the public in October 1963, the 380-acre Zoo, located adjacent to the Mir Alam Tank, offers its denizens a variety of habitats, including patches of forest, a water body, grassland, etc. Not surprisingly, the zoo has usually yielded a good selection of bird sightings. The various enclosures hold a lot of small ground and tree birds, as well as a number of water birds. Eurasian Thick-knees have been known to breed near the Sambhar enclosure. There have been several interesting sightings and observations in the past, and this trip should be no exception.

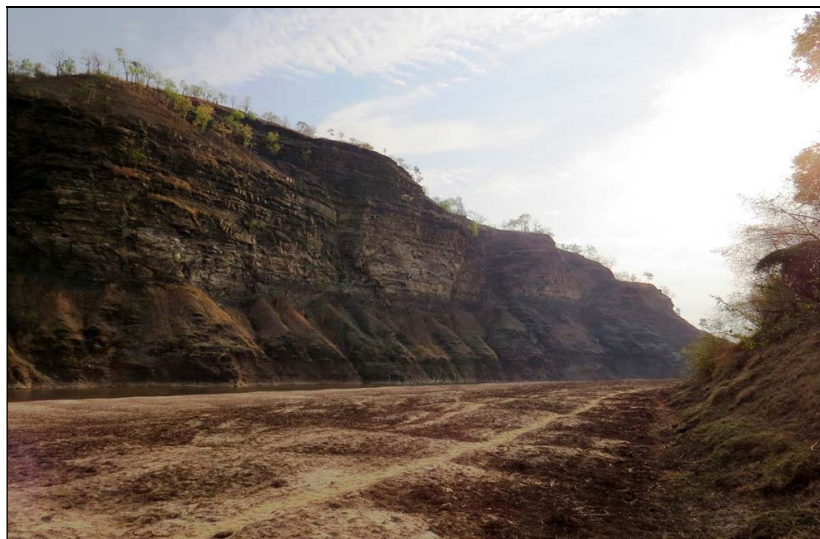
This outing has been arranged on a Monday through the good offices of Shri Ramakrishna Rao of A.P. Forest Dept. and courtesy of the Curator, because the Zoo has its weekly holiday on Mondays and members should be able to bird in relative peace.

This will be a half-day trip. For further details and to co-ordinate, please contact Ms. Surekha Aitabathula (99490-38532).

VULTURINE ADVENTURES

Trip Report – Adilabad district vulture breeding site, May, 2016

Text and photos: Humayun Taher



The cliffs

Any mention of the word “Vulture” immediately seems to conjure up a vision of mythical characters (mostly ancient Egyptian) jousting around in long feathered head-dresses and similar trappings. In actual fact, the ancient Egyptians revered the Vulture as the goddess Nekhbet, who was one of the most important deities in the entire pantheon of Egypt, as she was considered one of the two patron deities for all of Ancient Egypt after it was unified. Be that as it may, our objective was a lot more prosaic when six of us set out early one morning to visit the Bejjur range of Adilabad district, where there is now a flourishing colony of breeding Indian Long-billed Vultures (*Gyps indicus*).

The habitat here is sheer cliffs rising almost vertically from the bed of a small perennial stream. These cliffs soar a good two to three hundred feet up, and are rocky and very inaccessible. These factors perhaps are the prime reason why they have been selected by the birds as a safe breeding spot. Being large birds, the vultures have a particularly long nesting period, with the incubation period alone being about 40-45 days; the chicks too take a considerable time before they are fledged. So it is imperative that the birds should have a safe haven where they can nest without much danger from predators – although the vulture is itself a bird of prey, it is unfortunately not capable of scaring away nest robbers such as monitor lizards, snakes or jackals.



Long-billed Vulture

These critically-endangered Long-billed Vultures are vigorously protected by the Forest Department staff posted at this remote site in Adilabad district. Perhaps it is a blessing that this is such a remote place and, as such, visited very sparingly by the hordes of well-intentioned twitchers. The staff keep a very close eye on who is in the area, and visitors are very reluctantly received. It is fortunate for the birds that the staff have such a strong interest in their well-being, because the present population of this colony is so small that a single unfortunate event may cause the birds to desert and the colony could disappear forever. As it is, it seems to be picking up now, though a lot of work is still required before it can be pronounced as being a regular site and one which can sustain itself by regular recycling of the breeding birds.

Anyway, on a very hot afternoon in early May, we found ourselves at the very quaint and old-world village of Bejjur, greeting our host, the Forest Range Officer of the place. He has been one of the guiding lights behind not just the discovery of the vulture colony, but one of its most important champions; these critically-endangered birds owe him a big vote of thanks for his efforts and his dedication to protecting the frail and under-threat area from disturbances, and to providing the birds with the safety and the isolation that they most require.

We found that, to get to the habitat, we had to drive a considerable distance into the hills and down towards the small perennial stream known as the Pedda Vagu. This is a small tributary of the Pranahita River, which is itself a small tributary of the mighty Godavari River. The claim to fame of this stream is that it always has some water flowing through it, and has never been known to run completely dry. When we met it there was still a considerable amount of water flowing between its banks; though no more than about waist-deep, it was still a fast and powerful current. And since, in order to see the birds, we were obliged to ford this stream, we had ample opportunity to note that the current was indeed powerful enough to pluck strongly at our legs. A false step would have certainly meant an unpleasant

dunking, and since the bed of the stream was mostly soft, yielding sand, maintaining a foothold wasn't easy. However, by stepping out slowly and carefully, we won through and then there we were, staring up at the towering cliffs that housed the colony.

It became immediately clear that it was not going to be easy to see the birds. To begin with, their camouflage was marvellous. One bird, sitting right out in the open, went completely unnoticed by all of us until it actually flapped off. The sharp eyes of my companions soon started to penetrate the marvellous camouflage, but for the life of me, I couldn't find more than 12 of the 14 birds that the forest department staff counted. I stared at the cliff until my eyes started to water; Lawrence next to me was muttering away to himself as he scanned the rocks with his spotting scope; Hemant took time off from the vultures and got some beautiful shots of the other birds in the area; and all this time, the forest staff kept pointing away at the cliff and calling out the score until they had hit 14 – while all of us were still lagging behind on 10, 8 and 12... the 12 being the highest!

Oh, well... being such endangered birds, perhaps we should at least be thankful that there were 12. That's what I thought, too, until our host proudly informed us that the strength of the colony is a very healthy 24 adult birds, and another 6 young birds had fledged this season. A count of 30 of this critically-endangered species is cause for great rejoicing, and certainly we were loud in our congratulations and kudos to the department staff for the sterling work that they are doing in the area.



Shaheen Falcon

But, as you may have guessed, it wasn't all about the vultures. The presence of a nesting Black Shaheen Falcon (*Falco peregrinus peregrinator*) on the same cliff had us all in raptures. The Shaheen, be it said, seemed to think that there was a lot of unnecessary fuss being made of the vultures, and he certainly didn't seem to like them so close to his nest. We saw the male repeatedly diving at the soaring vultures, and these huge birds, with their seven-foot wingspan adroitly swerved this way and that to avoid the much smaller, but infinitely faster, falcon. I learnt later that the Black Shaheens are very intolerant of other birds around their nest, but for some reason known only to themselves, they still like to build their nests close to other birds... a curious habit that is certainly deserving of a more detailed study.

I think I've gone on far enough for a preamble. Let's go back to the beginning now... As I said, six of us set off early one morning from Hyderabad and, though we stopped at some very nice-looking lakes and marshes that had survived both the drought and the irresistible evaporation from the fierce heat, we were still more or less on time when we reached the large town of Mancherial. The birding along the way had been quite interesting, particularly at a very inviting little lake. We have marked this in as a likely spot for the next AWC counts in January 2017. Here we had some good sightings of several Little Grebes, cormorants of both persuasions, a few regal-looking Grey Herons and some Painted Storks. A pair of Ruddy Shelducks and quite a number of Lesser Whistling-ducks were also present, along with a considerable number of Spot-billed Ducks. A few Little Ringed Plovers were also seen running around on the shores of the little lake, and the presence of a Eurasian Marsh Harrier was a great and interesting surprise.



Common Kingfisher

But the most interesting sighting came as we were crossing the Godavari River and, glancing towards the Thermal Power Plant, we saw a large flock of close to 45 Comb Ducks, circling around a stand of tall trees. There was probably a lake or marsh inside those trees which we couldn't make out due to the distance and the fact that the trees were quite large and heavily foliated. But the sighting cheered us up because it showed that there may well be other waterbodies in the area that we can look for later on and add on to the list of AWC sites that we are still compiling. This is a rather unexplored district in terms of the Annual Waterfowl Counts, so it behoves us to keep an eye open for likely-looking places.

Having found a very suitable hostelry at Mancherial, we treated ourselves to a capital luncheon, a meal that we all enjoyed a great deal because of the almost ceaseless banter that was going on all around the table. When Lawrence is in the group, there is always a considerable amount of fun and laughter involved, but when we add on the presence of Surekha, Srikanth, Hemant and Harpal, we have a mixture almost too rich for normal consumption. But it is great fun to be a part of the group, even if it does necessitate holding on to our sides to prevent getting in stitches! Finished

with the stern business of victualling ourselves up, we started off again and, after a long and somewhat bumpy ride (the road was not in the best of conditions – another mixed blessing...), we finally reached the tiny little hamlet of Bejjur, where the forest department offices and guest house stand just outside the village square, and which boast a very tall electric tower on which was a nest of a pair of Indian Black (Red-naped) Ibis (*Pseudibis papillosa*). Their weird and mournful calls sounded throughout the time we were here; we even heard them calling late in the night, one call floating across to us at about 1 in the morning.

Depositing our luggage in the guest house and having been instructed on vulture sighting etiquette by our good host the Forest Range Officer Mr. Ram Mohan, we started off again and, driving through the small hamlets and thinly forested part of the district, we had some more good sightings, such as a solitary White-eyed Buzzard, a Crested Serpent Eagle, a small covey of the Common Bustard Quail, now called the Barred Buttonquail (*Turnix suscitator*) and even a single Black-bellied Tern flying over the stream.

The most interesting sighting, as far as I was concerned, was the sighting of the Orange-breasted Green Pigeon, which was a lifer for three of us, although it didn't really give us a very good view, because the sun was in our face and the bird was more a silhouette than anything else. But though the camera lenses were defeated by the position of the sun, it was very clear through the binoculars.



Short-toed Snake Eagle

The bird-life of the area seemed to be quite rich, as we had very interesting sightings of a covey of Rock Bush and Jungle Bush Quail, a circling Short-toed Snake Eagle carrying a small snake in its beak, three or four Shikras and, on the way back, three species of nightjars – the Common Indian, the Jungle, and the Savanna or Franklin's Nightjars. Very interesting to see these birds in very good numbers. When we add these on to the Long-billed Vultures, the Shaheen Falcon and the crag-loving Alpine Swifts, we have a very interesting list indeed and one that does credit to the richness of the birdlife of the region. I am convinced there may well be some very interesting surprises in store for us here, and it would be great if we could perhaps do a more thorough study of the area.



Red-naped Ibis

Walking back to the cars in the semi-dark, Srikanth and I flushed a large owl from a thickly-foliaged tree. Unfortunately we were unable to identify it. It was certainly not large enough to be an Indian Eagle Owl and it was too dark to be a Barn Owl; it may have been a Mottled Wood-owl, but we are not sure so the bird did not go onto our list. Spotted Owlets certainly made it on to the list, though, and there was even a small party of them flitting around the Forest Department guest house during the night.



Long-billed Vulture

I could go on enumerating the birds we saw; after all, a list of about 120 species is certainly very good going, though compiled over almost two full days. But I think I have said enough for now; the list of species seen is given below and must suffice. And if my readers insist, as I did, on giving pride of place to the Indian Vultures, they are certainly deserving of the honour. Long may they live on those beautiful cliffs that they call home!

Complete list of birds seen:

Little Grebe	Small Pratincole	Grey Wagtail
Little Cormorant	Little Tern	Paddyfield Pipit
Large Cormorant	Black-bellied Tern	Tree Pipit
Oriental Darter	Blue Rock Pigeon	Small Minivet
Little Egret	Laughing Dove	Common Woodshrike
Great Egret	Spotted Dove	Red-vented Bulbul
Intermediate Egret	Eurasian Collared Dove	Common Iora
Grey Heron	Orange-breasted Green Pigeon	Bay-backed Shrike
Purple Heron	Yellow-footed Green Pigeon	Long-tailed Shrike
Eastern Cattle Egret	Green Imperial-pigeon	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher
Indian Pond Heron	Rose-ringed Parakeet	Oriental Magpie-Robin
Striated Heron	Plum-headed Parakeet	Indian Black Robin
Painted Stork	Southern Coucal	Pied Bushchat
Asian Openbill	Blue-faced Malkoha	Yellow-eyed Babbler
Glossy Ibis	Asian Koel	Jungle Babbler
Black-headed Ibis	Common Hawk Cuckoo	Yellow-billed Babbler
Indian Black Ibis	Spotted Owlet	Brown-cheeked Fulvetta
Lesser Whistling-duck	Indian Jungle Nightjar	Ashy Prinia
Ruddy Shelduck	Indian Little Nightjar	Jungle Prinia
Comb Duck	Savanna Nightjar	Plain Prinia
Indian Spot-billed Duck	Asian Palm Swift	Common Tailorbird
Black-winged Kite	Alpine Swift	Paddyfield Warbler
Black Kite	Little Swift	Greenish Warbler
Indian Long-billed Vulture	Crested Treeswift	Thick-billed Flowerpecker
Short-toed Snake Eagle	Common Kingfisher	Purple-rumped Sunbird

Crested Serpent Eagle	White-breasted Kingfisher	Purple Sunbird
Marsh Harrier	Lesser Pied Kingfisher	Oriental White-eye
Indian Shikra	Little Green Bee-eater	Indian Silverbill
White-eyed Buzzard	Blue-tailed Bee-eater	Scaly-breasted Munia
Crested Hawk-Eagle	Indian Roller	House Sparrow
Shaheen Falcon	Common Hoopoe	Chestnut-shouldered Petronia
Grey Francolin	Indian Grey Hornbill	Brahminy Starling
Jungle Bush Quail	Coppersmith Barbet	Asian Pied Starling
Rock Bush Quail	Black-rumped Flameback	Common Myna
Small Buttonquail	Indian Bushlark	Indian Golden Oriole
Barred Buttonquail	Ashy-crowned Finch-lark	Black Drongo
Eurasian Coot	Dusky Crag-martin	White-bellied Drongo
Little Ringed Plover	Barn Swallow	Rufous Treepie
Red-wattled Lapwing	Red-rumped Swallow	House Crow
Black-winged Stilt	White-browed Wagtail	Large-billed Crow

Bird Humour



(From Times of India, 29-09-2012)

Bird of the Month

Text and photo: Umesh Mani

White-cheeked Barbet (*Psilopogon viridis*)



White-cheeked Barbet (Ankola, Karnataka, 17-02-2013)

Order: Piciformes
Family: Megalaimidae
Genus: *Psilopogon*
Species: *P. viridis*
Size: 23 cm

Description & distribution: Also known as the Small Green Barbet, the White-cheeked Barbet is a barbet endemic to the forested areas of the Western Ghats and some other adjoining hilly areas. Its predominantly green coloration, and its tendency to perch still for fairly long periods make it difficult to spot; however, one may be able to locate it by tracing its call. The White-cheeked Barbet is darker green above and paler green below, with a brown head streaked with white. The streaks extend down over the mantle, and to the breast. The legs and feet are dark grey, and the bill is pale pinkish.

It is very similar to the Brown-headed (or Large Green) Barbet, which is more widely distributed, but can be told apart by the distinctive white supercilium and a broad white cheek stripe below the eye. It also lacks the orange eye-ring of the Brown-headed Barbet. Size may be somewhat larger in the northern part of its range, which extends from South-west Madhya Pradesh and the Surat Dangs southwards in the Western Ghats, and along associated hills like the Nilgiris, across to the southern parts of the Eastern Ghats (mainly, the Shevaroy and Chitteri hills).

Habitat & behaviour: The White-cheeked Barbet is found in primary and secondary forests and woodlands, including wet deciduous and evergreen forests, and also inhabits urban parks and wooded patches. Resident and essentially sedentary, it may

move over short distances. It is arboreal and rarely visits the ground. Mostly frugivorous, it feeds on berries and fruits of Ficus trees, as well as other fruiting trees. They may also occasionally take winged termites and other flying insects, or flower nectar (e.g. Bombax). It gets most of its water requirement from its fruit diet, though it may drink or bathe in water standing in tree holes.

Generally able to coexist peacefully, the White-cheeked Barbet may, at times, behave aggressively, especially while foraging and during the breeding season, when it is also more vocal. The call, an explosive *trrr* leading into a monotonous *kotroo kotroo*, is also very similar to that of the Brown-headed Barbet, and difficult to tell apart. The White-cheeked Barbet also tends to emit a single-note *wut*, reminiscent of the Copper-smith Barbet or the Collared Scops Owl.

Nesting: The White-cheeked Barbet breeds from December to July, before the heaviest monsoon rains. It is a primary cavity nester, digging out a nest in the trunk or vertical branch of a tree (Gulmohur and African Tulip seem to be preferred trees in urban areas). The nest may also be used as a roost, and the bird may reuse the same nest tree in subsequent years, though excavating a new entrance hole. It generally raises two broods every season, consisting of about 3 eggs each.

Local name: The White-cheeked Barbet is known as '*chhota basanta*' in Hindi, '*sonna hasira barbet*' in Kannada, '*pachila kudukka*' or '*chinna kutturuvan*' (possibly due to its *kutroo* call) in Malayalam, and '*chinna kukkuruvan*' or '*kattu kukkuruvan*' in Tamil.

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A HIGHWAY BIRDING TRIP, November, 2015

Text and Photos: Srikanth Bhamidipati

Part-1 – Nawabupet Lake



White-breasted Kingfisher

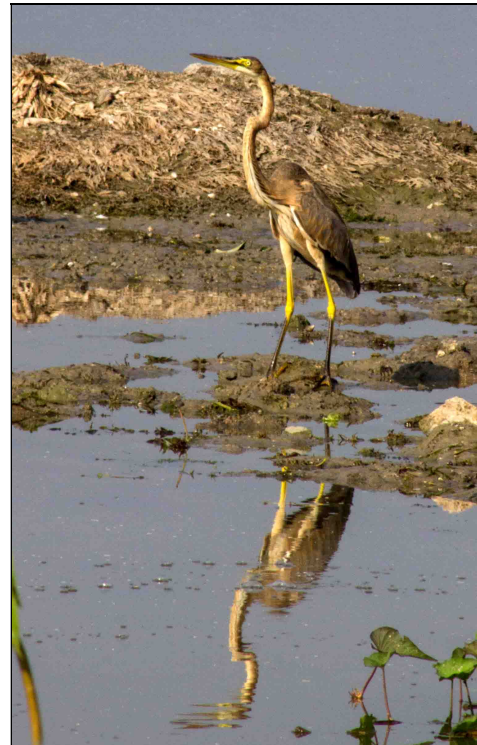
My father and I were to go to Vijayawada for some personal work for 3 days, so I thought the best way would be to travel by road – that way we could cover a few lakes on the way and try and spot my favorite creatures on the planet...birds!

Struggling awake very early on D-Day, I rushed to get ready and bam, I was in the car 'right' on time at 5:00AM. (Well, the plan was for 4:30AM, but c'mon, Indian Standard Time!)

Since we started our journey from Hyderabad before sunlight, until 6:00AM there wasn't much scope for any birding – except for a few bats which I saw before daybreak, and the amazing sound of the chirps – believe me, it was so melodic, I could've easily gone back to sleep if not for the caffeine.

With daybreak came the first sighting – our state bird, the Indian Roller with, just a few feet away, a White-breasted Kingfisher. I was enjoying the cool breeze and checking on both sides of the road. As always, we again passed another set of the same birds, and I felt good that I could see so many Rollers. Over the next 20-30 kms, I was amazed to see many more of the same birds, after which I started to keep count.

Apart from these two species, there were a few Egrets, Bulbuls and other common species. After about 2 hours, at 7:00AM we halted for breakfast at "7 Highway Food Court". While parking the car, I could see several Rose-ringed Parakeets and a few Black Drongos flying around. After clicking some images, I finally went into the restaurant, recharged myself with breakfast and caffeine, and embarked on the journey to the next stop – Nawabupet Lake, about 80 kms from the breakfast point.



Purple Heron

Reaching Nawabupet Lake around 8:45AM, I was amazed at the size of the lake. Spread over 7-9 sq.kms, Nawabupet is a 70-year-old drinking-water lake, noted for its rich aquatic life. The major threat to the lake is the water-tanker people, who take water from here to supply to the households.



Little Ringed Plover

From the bank of the lake, I could see several species of birds like Cormorants, Storks, Ibises, Sandpipers, Terns, Kingfishers, Sunbirds, Mynas etc.



Pied Kingfisher



Painted Stork

Unfortunately, I couldn't see any Grey Pelicans, but locals confirmed the presence of the bird for over 25 years now. Nawabupet is also a major roosting area for Painted Storks and

other water-dependent species which breed during the season. The usually more common Coots, Egrets and other water birds appeared to have been outnumbered by the Painted Storks. There were almost 150 of them there; Nawabupet has apparently become a regular feeding ground over the years, and offers an excellent opportunity to observe their feeding behaviour.

We observed that while a group of the storks stood inert to grab fish or frogs, another group moved quickly in the shallow water with necks craned down and bills submerged in the water. With their bills open, they swivel from side to side to catch the fish.

A well-spent 3 hours later, we decided to head onto the bund alongside the tank. I was surprised to see, among a group of Black-winged Stilts, a bird with an inverted beak! Then I remembered something Lawrence Uncle once taught me – if the beak is inverted, and the wings have a white patch on them, then it is a Pied Avocet. I feel that the best way to learn about birds and remember their features is to link the memories with the person who teaches you – so thank you, Lawrence Uncle, for showing me that bird on your laptop.

Having clicked an image, I was trying to set my camera for a better picture when I found that it was long gone. That reminded me of another saying – “Good things are hard to catch”. But my excitement at spotting that bird was high anyway.



Purple-rumped Sunbird (female)

Proceeding further on the bund, I spotted a few other species – Grebes, Coots, Garganey, Cotton Pygmy-goose, etc. There were also more Indian Rollers there!

All this while, *something* was missing, but I couldn't put my finger on it. Anyway, around 1:00PM, having spent a little time near a temple, we started heading back towards Vijayawada, when my father pointed out a bird to me. And there it was – a Black-winged Kite perched on a tree – it was then that it struck me – what was missing was a RAPTOR!

Moving on, I again saw many Indian Rollers and White-breasted Kingfishers, besides other common birds like Parakeets, Munias, Prinias, Pied Bushchats, Black Kites, etc.

By about 2:30PM we reached Vijayawada. At home, the first thing I did was to start looking at the images I clicked that day. Even my non-birder father was eager to see the images I got. I then compiled my bird-list and estimated that there were close to 700 birds of different species in and around the lake!



Common Pochard

In the excitement, I planned a trip to Uppalapadu the next day, which my father will write about – from a non-birder's viewpoint.

Incidentally, the total count of Indian Rollers was about 63, and that of the White-breasted Kingfishers was about 57. Amazing!



Lesser Whistling-duck

Part-2 – Uppalapadu Bird Sanctuary



Birds roosting at Uppalapadu

“After an eventful journey (in my son’s opinion) to Vijayawada, feeling tired and stressed out we decided to call it a day. As we were discussing further plans for Diwali, my son as always was planning his escape into the wild, and suggested that we needed to celebrate the morning with birds. As a non-birder I wasn’t too keen about the idea of birding that day. As it turned out, we ended up waking up in the morning at 4:00AM, and started towards Uppalapadu Bird Sanctuary at 5:00AM. Initially I thought it would be just another wait for me till my son finished his birding. But as we were driving through the fields and the tiny roads, my son, sitting in the driving seat, kept getting excited every now and then, giving me the occasional fright as the car would swerve on the road. But then this made me understand his passion for birds.

On one such occasion, we were walking in the fields, and suddenly my son got excited watching a distant flying bird, and started shouting Raptor... Raptor! I heard him say that it was a Red-necked Falcon. Later, we proceeded further towards the sanctuary and parked our car near the gate.

My initial thoughts were that I just wanted to go in and come out immediately and rest, since I didn’t want to go through the waiting again. But after we entered the sanctuary, to my utter surprise, we saw thousands of birds resting and flying here and there – it was an amazing sight which I have not seen in a long time.

all, a total of 75 species were found that day, and I can say I really had the best Diwali Dhamaka ever!

This interested me a lot, and I started clicking a few photographs with my mobile camera. To me, most of the birds looked the same, but my son had got them right. I was one of those who thought that birdwatching had nothing much to do and most of the birds were the same. But that's when my son pointed out that there were about 3 different types of pelicans there. I was watching the different birds nest in peace; unlike us humans, how these birds co-exist peacefully was the most amazing thing to watch.



Rosy Pelican

We then took a small stroll towards the Panchayat School to see more birds. This time, there were different types of birds, and not the water birds, which was truly a beautiful sight.”

This is what my father had to say about our little trip to Uppalapadu, which lasted for about 4 hours. I understand his knowledge about birds is very limited, considering his lack of prior interest in the subject, but I was happy to see a few bird-related applications downloaded on his phone after the trip.

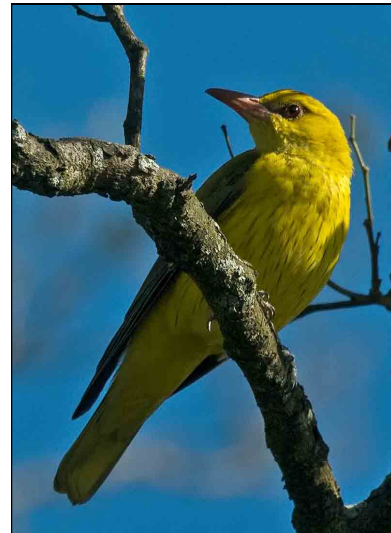


Asian Openbill

There were 3 lakes which I went to, apart from the main Pelican sanctuary. 2 were completely dried up, which was sad to see, but still there were a few Ibises there. Overall, the number of birds spotted was impressive, and vegetation cover was also good. In



White-breasted Waterhen



Indian Golden Oriole



Crested Serpent Eagle

A complete list of the birds seen on this trip is given below:

Sl. No.	Species	Location	Sl. No.	Species	Location
1	Indian Roller	N, U	41	House Crow	N, U
2	Whiskered Tern	N	42	Large-billed Crow	N, U
3	River Tern	N, U	43	Pied Bushchat	N, U
4	Grey Heron	N, U	44	Little Grebe	N, U
5	Indian Pond Heron	N, U	45	Common Pochard	N
6	Purple Heron	N, U	46	Pied Avocet	N
7	Glossy Ibis	N, U	47	Asian Pied Starling	U
8	Red-naped Ibis	N, U	48	Brahminy Starling	U
9	Black-headed Ibis	U	49	Chestnut-tailed Starling	U
10	Pied Kingfisher	N, U	50	Asian Openbill	N, U
11	Common Kingfisher	N, U	51	Oriental Darter	N, U
12	White-throated Kingfisher	N, U	52	Grey-Headed Swamphen	N, U
13	Cotton Pygmy-goose	N	53	Indian Spot-billed Duck	N, U
14	Garganey	N, U	54	Northern Shoveler	N, U
15	Comb Duck	U	55	Rosy Pelican	U
16	Little Egret	N, U	56	Spot-billed Pelican	U
17	Great Egret	N, U	57	Shikra	U
18	Black-winged Stilt	N, U	58	Red-necked Falcon	U
19	Little Cormorant	N, U	59	Crested Serpent Eagle	U
20	Great Cormorant	N, U	60	Black Kite	U
21	Lesser Whistling-duck	N, U	61	Brahminy Kite	U
22	Common Coot	N, U	62	White-breasted Waterhen	U
23	Common Sandpiper	N, U	63	Red-vented Bulbul	N, U
24	Wood Sandpiper	N, U	64	Common Iora	U
25	Cattle Egret	N, U	65	Jerdon's Leafbird	U
26	Spotted Dove	N, U	66	Blyth's Reed Warbler	U
27	Common Myna	N, U	67	Indian Golden Oriole	U
28	Black Drongo	N, U	68	Yellow-billed Babbler	U
29	White-bellied Drongo	U	69	Large Grey Babbler	U
30	Little Ringed Plover	N	70	Oriental White-eye	U
31	Ashy Prinia	N, U	71	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher	U
32	Plain Prinia	U	72	Common Tailorbird	U
33	Southern Coucal	N, U	73	Bay-backed Shrike	U
34	Asian Koel	N, U	74	Barn Swallow	U
35	Red-wattled Lapwing	N, U	75	Wire-tailed Swallow	U
36	Laughing Dove	N, U	76	Indian Peafowl	U
37	Rock Pigeon	U	77	Blue-faced Malkoha	U
38	Emerald Dove	U	78	Bronze-winged Jacana	U
39	Baya Weaver	N, U	79	Common Kestrel	U
40	Painted Stork	N, U	80	Black-crowned Night Heron	U
Legend: N = Nawabupet; U = Uppalapadu Bird Sanctuary					

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FIELD OUTING: Sunday, 19th June 2016: Narepally Reserve Forest. Meeting point: Opp. Mangatrai Pearls, Punjagutta, 6.00AM.

Narepally Reserve Forest is a 200 Hectare Eco- Park which has forest trails and a meditation zone too. Several species of birds, Spotted Deer, Wild Boar, Civet and Jungle Cats have been seen here. The trip promises to be an exciting one.

This will be a half-day trip. For further details and to co-ordinate, please contact Ms. Surekha Aitabathula (99490-38532).

An Impromptu Trip to Umamaheshwaram, April 3, 2016

Text and photos: Humayun Taher



Yellow-throated Bulbul

It was all decided over phone and Whatsapp as is the trend! We started off at dawn for the little cliff-side temple of Uma Maheshwaram at the gates of the Srisailem Tiger Reserve, an interesting birding destination. Lawrence, Amritha, Srikanth and I looked forward to an interesting trip. As it turned out, we actually got a lot more excitement than we had bargained for.

Having found a very passable *chai* shop along the way to victual up, we came up to the once-huge reservoir of Dindi, and stopped momentarily to see if there was anything here. Finding the shrunken reservoir too horrible to contemplate, we hurriedly departed before melancholia overtook us at this shocking sight. And because of this, we were right on time when we finally pulled up at the parking lot of the old temple.

The little shop that stands just in front of the temple complex also supplies *chai*. So, having taken the opportunity to refresh ourselves with another cup of the steaming oolong and to strike up an acquaintance with half-a-dozen extremely obliging Emerald Doves (*Chalcophaps indica*), we proceed further up the trail, encountering along the way interesting sightings as a Black-headed Oriole (*Oriolus xanthornus*) the resident Tickell's Blue

Flycatcher (*Cyornis tickelliae*) and my old friend, Percy the Blue Rock Thrush (*Monticola solitarius*). It seemed to have forgotten me... or maybe it was unhappy with me for not bringing its best friend P... along. Or it might have had something to do with the fact that it had brought its mate along! The hen led it further into the bushes and, with a somewhat unhappy cluck, it followed her into the canopy of the large trees shading the trail.



Emerald Dove

We then got busy trying to get a good sighting of the splendid Golden-fronted Leafbird (*Chloropsis aurifrons*) that was leaping about in the shrubbery, but it was rather shy and refused to appear out in the open.

We were somewhat compensated for this pusillanimity by the sighting of a splendid Rufous Treepie (*Dendrocitta vagabunda*) carrying on some sort of excavation inside half a coconut shell. I found myself fascinated by the strength of the bird, as it held down the shell in a position conducive to tearing at the insides, while still continuing to hold on to the thin branch it was perched on. Truly, birds are adept at turning most things to their advantage.



Rufous Treepie

At around this time, I took my morning constitutional to hitherto unknown levels by indulging in a solo flight attempt down the hillside. Having come out of this with a rather nasty cut on my shin, I decided to take things easy for a bit and so I sat myself down under the large *figus* tree and scanned the branches.

As it happened, I couldn't have hit on a better plan because as soon as I had settled down, a small flycatcher flitted about in front of me. The few tantalizing glimpses I could get convinced me that it was something worth waiting for, but the bird was so active that it was not easy to focus on it. Finally however, the long awaited chance came when the bird, no doubt tired out with its exertions, decided to stop for a sip of water.

When it came down to the water trough, I saw it in all its glory – a bird I have long wanted to photograph, the little Black-naped Monarch (*Hypothymis azurea*). It is a very colourful bird and, unfortunately, a very active one. It would not sit still for more than a minute. Even the slaking of his thirst was completed in little more than a couple of seconds. Once, I thought I had captured the bird – it was sitting out in the open and allowed me to get the camera on it, and adjust the focus and then, just as I pressed the shutter button, it dived behind a leaf and all I got in the frame was a puff of blue!



Black-naped Monarch

So much for the joys of photography... but then, as I always keep reminding myself, if I can get a good sighting through my rather shop-soiled eyes, that is all that I need. A photograph is only a very pleasant bonus and not absolutely required really.

The cliff-side was getting hot and besides, one needs to change tactics to continue birding in the heat. Lawrence reminded us of a little well down the hill, where birding can be done merely by sitting down and pretending to be trees! He managed to convince us that we would never be happy until we had pretended to be trees on the edge of this ancient waterhole. So back to the car, yet another cup of vital bohea, and down the hill we went. We found the ancient well and almost immediately, discovered that there was more to this “pretending-to-be-a-tree” business than meets the eye. To begin with, it is necessary to first discover a genuine tree so that we could take advantage of the shade it offered.

The first to descend was a quartet of White-browed Bulbuls (*Pycnonotus luteolus*). These birds were present in large numbers. They seemed to be thirsty and indulged in a refreshing plunge in small puddles here and there. But this gang seemed to be a sort of social club and they tucked in right heartily, arranging themselves quite nicely on the rocky steps of the tank.



White-browed Bulbul

But the bulbuls were not the only visitors; a little Blue-throated Flycatcher (*Cyornis rubeculoides*) was also thirsty and spent a long time pottering about on the stone steps leading down to the well. Interestingly enough, it never stopped dancing the whole time, and I found it even more interesting to see that he was the only fellow in the area. He couldn't be courting because he was manifestly alone, but he persisted in dancing about the whole time... curious ideas some of these creatures have!



Blue-throated Flycatcher

The male Asian Paradise-flycatcher (*Terpsiphone paradisi*) that now appeared had a lot more sense. It flew down and sipped from the surface, rested for a few seconds on the steps and then rapidly retreated into the cool of the shrubbery. He came back a few minutes later and the whole exercise was repeated again, and this second drink seemed to have supplied his wants because he now dived back into the shrubbery and did a neat vanishing act.



Asian Paradise-flycatcher

We were considerably disappointed at his pusillanimity but, before we could start complaining a little warbler came fluttering down just over our heads. We spent many minutes and a considerable amount of profanity trying to fix it in our binocs, while mopping the sweat off our faces. Just then, the bird decided to stop bouncing about, and we were finally able to get it in our optics and identify it as the Sykes's Warbler (*Iduna rama*). This is an interesting species, although not unknown to these hills. I think we have become used to brushing off most warblers as "Little Brown Jobs" and have not taken the trouble to look closely at them and try to identify them. There is a lot of grief involved in such an activity, but there are unexpected rewards as well.



Blue-faced Malkoha

The Blue-faced Malkoha (*Rhopodytes viridirostris*) that put in an appearance was very thirsty, but also very cautious. To start with, it didn't seem to like us at all, and even took the trouble of coming down almost into our laps to ascertain if we were friendly or not. We did nothing that could be construed by its astute intelligence as being unfriendly, and so it condescended to give us the benefit of the doubt. That done, it finally came down to the pool for its afternoon drink. It came somewhat mincingly, and with many false starts, but eventually got its mouthful of water. Its bashfulness disappeared and we had the pleasurable sight of this shy bird disporting itself out in the open, occasionally leaning forward and grabbing yet another mouthful of the life-giving fluid.

We saw no less than 35 species of birds by this little well, and out of a day-list of 88 species, that accounts for something like forty percent. I dislike such statistics, but I cannot help feeling that if the heat of this summer continues like it has been doing over the past few days, we shall soon be increasing these statistics to a far more startling seventy or even eighty percent.



Lesser Whitethroat



White-throated Fantail

The day grew hotter and if we continued emulating trees, there was a strong possibility that we would soon wither away. We returned to the car and started homewards. A convenient *dhaba* by the wayside did us well in the matter of nutritious victuals and so, well-refreshed, and with a bag of around 88 species, we could confidently say that our day had been an unqualified success! We should all do these trips more often.

A list of the species seen is given below. This list also includes species seen at Dindi and en route, designated with an "N":

SI #	Common Name	Scientific Name		SI #	Common Name	Scientific Name	
1	Little Grebe	Tachybaptus ruficollis	N	31	Blue-faced Malkoha	Phaenicophaeus viridirostris	
2	Little Cormorant	Phalacrocorax niger	N	32	Asian Koel	Eudynamys scolopacea	
3	Little Egret	Egretta garzetta	N	33	Asian Palm-swift	Cypsiurus balasiensis	
4	Great Egret	Egretta alba	N	34	Little Swift	Apus affinis	
5	Intermediate Egret	Egretta intermedia	N	35	Crested Treeswift	Hemiprocne coronata	
6	Eastern Cattle Egret	Bubulcus coromandus		36	White-breasted Kingfisher	Halcyon smyrnensis	
7	Indian Pond-heron	Ardeola grayii	N	37	Little Green Bee-eater	Merops orientalis	
8	Asian Openbill	Anastomus oscitans	N	38	Indian Roller	Coracias benghalensis	
9	Lesser Whistling-duck	Dendrocygna javanica	N	39	Brown-headed Barbet	Megalaima zeylanica	
10	Indian Spot-billed Duck	Anas poecilorhyncha	N	40	Coppersmith Barbet	Megalaima haemacephala	
11	Garganey	Anas querquedula	N	41	Black-rumped Flameback	Dinopium benghalense	
12	Black-winged Kite	Elanus caeruleus		42	Ashy-crowned Finch-lark	Eremopterix griseus	
13	Black Kite	Milvus migrans		43	Red-rumped Swallow	Hirundo daurica	
14	Indian Shikra	Accipiter badius		44	White-browed Wagtail	Motacilla maderaspatensis	
15	Crested Hawk-Eagle	Spizaetus cirrhatus		45	Grey Wagtail	Motacilla cinerea cinerea	
16	Grey Francolin	Francolinus pondicerianus		46	Small Minivet	Pericrocotus cinnamomeus	
17	Indian Peafowl	Pavo cristatus		47	Common Woodshrike	Tephrodornis pondicerianus	
18	Red-wattled Lapwing	Vanellus indicus	N	48	Paradise Flycatcher	Terpsiphone paradisi	
19	Black-tailed Godwit	Limosa limosa	N	49	Black-naped Blue Monarch	Hypothymis azurea	
20	Common Greenshank	Tringa nebularia	N	50	White-throated Fantail	Rhipidura albicollis	
21	Wood Sandpiper	Tringa glareola	N	51	Red-vented Bulbul	Pycnonotus cafer	
22	Black-winged Stilt	Himantopus himantopus	N	52	Yellow-throated Bulbul	Pycnonotus xantholaemus	
23	Rock Dove	Columba livia intermedia		53	White-browed Bulbul	Pycnonotus luteolus	
24	Laughing Dove	Streptopelia senegalensis		54	Common Iora	Aegithina tiphia	
25	Spotted Dove	Streptopelia chinensis		55	Gold-fronted Leafbird	Chloropsis aurifrons	
26	Eurasian Collared-dove	Streptopelia decaocto		56	Asian Brown Flycatcher	Muscicapa latirostris	
27	Emerald Dove	Chalcophaps indica		57	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher	Cyornis tickelliae	
28	Rose-ringed Parakeet	Psittacula krameri		58	Blue-headed Rock-thrush	Monticola cinclorhynchus	
29	Plum-headed Parakeet	Psittacula cyanocephala		59	Blue Rock-thrush	Monticola solitarius	
30	Southern Coucal	Centropus sinensis		60	Oriental Magpie-Robin	Copsychus saularis	

SI #	Common Name	Scientific Name		SI #	Common Name	Scientific Name	
61	Indian Black Robin	Saxicoloides fulicatus		75	Purple-rumped Sunbird	Leptocoma zeylonica	
62	Pied Bushchat	Saxicola caprata bicolor		76	Purple Sunbird	Cinnyris asiaticus	
63	Tawny-bellied Babbler	Dumetia hypertythra		77	Oriental White-eye	Zosterops palpebrosus	
64	Large Grey Babbler	Turdoides malcolmi		78	Indian Silverbill	Euodice malabarica	N
65	Jungle Babbler	Turdoides striata		79	Scaly-breasted Munia	Lonchura punctulata	N
66	Yellow-billed Babbler	Turdoides affinis		80	Tricoloured Munia	Lonchura malacca	
67	Ashy Prinia	Prinia socialis		81	House Sparrow	Passer domesticus	
68	Jungle Prinia	Prinia sylvatica		82	Common Myna	Acridotheres tristis	
69	Plain Prinia	Prinia inornata		83	Black-hooded Oriole	Oriole xanthornus	
70	Common Tailorbird	Orthotomus sutorius		84	Black Drongo	Dicrurus macrocercus	
71	Sykes's Warbler	Hippolais rama		85	White-bellied Drongo	Dicrurus caerulescens	
72	Tickell's Leaf-warbler	Phylloscopus affinis		86	Rufous Treepie	Dendrocitta vagabunda	
73	Greenish Warbler	Phylloscopus trochiloides		87	House Crow	Corvus splendens	
74	Lesser Whitethroat	Sylvia curruca	N	88	Indian Jungle Crow	Corvus culminatus	

* * *

Report – Annual Waterfowl Census Meeting

Ambika Pradhan



Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati

As the sun peeked out of the overcast evening sky on World Environment Day, members of the BSAP met at Vidyaranya High School, Saifabad, to celebrate and discuss the successful completion of the 50th Asian Waterfowl Census. Hot coffee and tea with some Hyderabad biscuits and samosas started off the meet. The members interacted with one another and shared some good moments. The meeting was hosted by Amritha Lawrence who invited the Executive Committee members onto the dais. Delivering the Welcome Address, the President, Mr. Aasheesh Pittie, spoke about the importance of such activities and the role which members of the association should play, and also emphasized the importance of volunteers in a project of such a large scale as the AWC. After that our Honorable Secretary, Mr. Shafaat Ulla spoke a few words about the AWC activity and how things have changed over time. Also on the dais were Ms. Surekha and Mr. Bharadwaj who applauded the work done by the enthusiastic volunteers and stressed upon them the importance of water birds, the need to protect our wetlands, the declining population of birds and the need to conserve them.

Our AWC coordinator Mr. Humayun Taher had taken the mantle of explaining to the volunteers, the facts and figures of the current AWC activity. While there has been an increase in the number of species sighted, there has been a drastic decline in the total count. The total species sighted during AWC 2016 were close to 125 species while the total count of birds was 1.5 lakhs approximately. Adding to the above figures Mr. Taher also raised concerns about the low bird counts.

Compared to previous years there was an increase in the number of volunteers and totalled 46. Volunteers who attended the meet had come from many parts of the state, and it was wonderful to meet them after a long time. Volunteers had the opportunity to share their experiences about their travel, their sightings and all the funny moments they experienced during the AWC. There were some very interesting sightings and records of different species, one of them being the Ferruginous Duck or White-eyed Pochard which was spotted after almost 12 years.

After the volunteers shared their experiences, they were applauded and awarded certificates. They had taken out time from their busy and chaotic lives and had contributed to the bird count; this was much appreciated. The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks by Srikanth B., who thanked all the EC members

and volunteers. He requested the volunteers to provide support in the subsequent AWC activities and other projects which our society would host in the future. The day ended after all the volunteers posed for pictures and finally everyone dispersed.

* * *

Trip Report – Ameenpura Lake – April 17, 2016

Text and photos: Humayun Taher



Greater Flamingo

It is instructive and very interesting to see that, though Flamingos are no longer a rarity around Hyderabad, they still have the ability to attract the public in large numbers. Birders are also prey to this attraction and so, the news of the Flamingos being present in large numbers at the Ameenpura Lake was sufficient for the BSAP members to instantly plan the April field trip to this venue. On the appointed day, therefore, I joined forces with the members at the usual rendezvous at Punjagutta X-roads, and we started off for the lake.

A small oasis in the midst of the concrete jungle that is Hyderabad, it is perhaps not really surprising that Ameenpura Lake is a very popular picnic and photography spot. Around 12 of us met up with some other members who had already arrived at the lake. The place was absolutely crawling with people, most of them in action with their long lenses, though I did spot a few who preferred the binoculars. My spotting scope, once it had been set up, became the focal point for many who had come only for a glimpse of the birds. Soon there was a line of people waiting their turn to peer through the scope, make appropriate admiring noises, and whip out their phones to take photos through the scope. Digi-scoping was being taken to a new high here!

Having picked up Shafaatsaab and the other members at the Punjagutta X-roads, we took the old familiar road and reached the place in reasonable time, though we had to wait a few minutes for one of our members. But since we utilised this opportunity to victual ourselves up with a much-needed cup of tea, this delay was not deemed to be a matter of much consequence. We were able to reach the little marsh abutting the main road more or less about the time we had anticipated.

I have to admit I did not expect this... I was totally appalled to see there was not a single drop of water here. The reeds continued fresh and green all around the edges of the erstwhile marsh, but the marsh itself had ceased to exist. A couple of Pond Herons probed hopefully in the wet mud, along with a few egrets – maybe they were managing to make a sort of living from the frogs that had probably buried themselves in the mud to keep themselves moist. At least, I hope this is so; I see no other way even these few birds would remain in the area for long, otherwise.

Since there was nothing much to see here, the group did not want to stop, although I had half a mind to investigate whether the weeds and reeds were hiding their usual numbers of Painted-snipes. Bowing to the wishes of the group, however, we continued on to the main lake. The now-famous "*Sparrow Bush*" still held its quota of Sparrows, and there were others also in the vicinity, some building their nests. We did not stop for long here, though, and finally reached the bund of the main lake, stopping at a convenient vantage point from which we could scan the entire stretch of water and see what was to be seen.

I think all of us were somewhat surprised to see the shrinkage of this lake also. The waters had shrunk to maybe 25 or 30 percent of the normal spread. The flamingos were there, sure enough – a flock of about 100 birds spread out close to the shores on the far side of the lake. But even more amazing was the human activity – there were some 30 to 40 cars parked all along the lake edge on the far side, and a veritable sea of humanity was to be described on the shores. Little knots of people stood here and there, peering through their lenses at the birds. Fortunately, though, the birds seemed to have learnt to take it in their stride. I suppose really they have nowhere else to go, so they are just doing the best that they can.



Little Ringed Plover

Driving down to the other side, we shouldered our paraphernalia and made our way down to the shores of the lake to see what else was around. A Kentish Plover was doing a broken-wing display right in front of us. Respecting the intention behind this action, we took a slight detour and approached the lake shore. The water here could not have been more than six inches deep. Notwithstanding, there were considerable numbers of birds to be seen. I am sure this is because the birds now have no alternative, as the drought has dried up most of the smaller, shallower lakes in the region. Maybe that's why we saw so many migrants, in addition to the resident population.



Black-tailed Godwit

A flock of some 70 Black-tailed Godwits, many of them in full breeding plumage, were even more interesting than the Greater Flamingos dotted all around the lake in small groups. It was instructive to see about 40 of the birds, still in juvenile plumage, clearly demonstrate the nursery-habits of the birds – the entire group of young birds kept together, with three adults patrolling the perimeter, as it were, to prevent any of them straying. Interspersed with the flamingos was a small group of about 10 Spot-billed Pelicans. A quartet of Ruddy Shelduck, and about 45 Garganey, were the only migrant ducks, although the residents were well-represented by Lesser Whistling-ducks, Spot-billed Ducks and Comb Ducks. Some of the migrant waders were also still around – a decent pod of Little Stints, Common and Wood Sandpipers, Common Greenshanks, and the Black-tailed Godwits earlier mentioned. As to the few Godwits still in non-breeding plumage, we hazarded a guess that these may be juveniles not yet ready to breed. A very plausible suggestion, it adds another interesting point to the observations on these birds. Truly, birding can become even more enjoyable if we take some time to observe carefully.



Black-winged Stilt

My old friends, the Black-winged Stilts were also around in good numbers. Scanning the flocks for the black-necked individual often seen on this lake, I was happy to see not one but some 5-6 specimens of the dark-head-and-neck variety. These colour aberrations are common in this species and it would be interesting if someone could throw some light on the phenomenon.



Ashy-crowned Sparrowlark

Madhuri and Jayati, who had gone a bit further, found a male Ashy-crowned Sparrow-lark carrying a caterpillar in its beak and, carefully observing where it went, were able to see it feeding its young. The nest still had two unhatched eggs, and one chick, so it seems possible that the chick was only hatched that day or a day earlier. Bearing in mind that crows and herons would think nothing of robbing the nest, we did not approach any closer. River and Little Terns were basking on the sandbanks, and these bold birds are also known to sometimes take chicks, so it behooved us to show caution in these matters.



Yellow Wagtail

But by far the most interesting sightings on the shores of this lake were the wagtails! We saw several birds; Shafaatsaab told us that he had come to this place a few days earlier and had been rewarded by a sighting of close to a thousand wagtails coming in to roost! This sounds suspiciously like the large flocks we had seen roosting in the reeds at this place in 2012, and it is gratifying to learn that the birds are coming back. There was a time in 2013, when the wagtails appeared to have deserted this roost, and we had been much exercised as to where they may have gone. So, if these were indeed the same birds returning to their traditional roost, it looks very much as though the lake is once again starting to come into its own! I was curious enough to count the number of wagtails I saw on this trip, and I came up with a count of 72, consisting of the Citrine, Blue-headed Yellow and White-browed persuasions.

Birding with the group is never complete until we have shared breakfast. The sun was climbing higher now, and the day was getting a little uncomfortable. So we repaired back to the cars, and soon a most welcome repast spread itself out on the hood. Shafaatsaab's now-famous egg sandwiches were an instant hit, but there were some other equally interesting gastronomic triumphs. Refreshed and, perhaps, just a little bloated with this feast, we discussed plans, being interrupted by Col. Cheema's

sighting of a pair of Small Pratincoles, and the most marvellous overhead flight of a squadron of 17 Eurasian Spoonbills.

The Spoonbills are also now becoming regulars at this little lake and I sincerely hope this trend continues. The only concern seems to be that fishing activities are still continuing unabated here. How many fishing birds such as Cormorants and Darters may be getting entangled in the fishing nets, we don't know. But I scarcely think we should be complaining about this because, after all, it is only because of the huge population of fish at this lake that the birds are here in such good numbers.

Stopping the traditional fishing activities here may be counter-productive in more ways than one. Firstly there will be a lot less fish for the birds to feed on and, secondly the local fishermen may start to drive away the birds so that they can get their fishing area back. I would actually like to see this place turned into a community reserve, and some strong and innovative plans drawn up that would benefit the birds, the fishermen and the local people – that way, all parties would be happy and would have an interest in the protection and preservation of this place.

With the day now heated up to an extent where pleasurable birding was no longer possible, and with some 79 species already recorded, it was time to bring this trip to a close. So, not without some regret, we started back, feeling that the morning had been most worth-while. If a large number of the group had been entertained by the sighting of the graceful Greater Flamingos, there were others who had equally enjoyed the spectacle of the colourful Black-tailed Godwits. St. Patrick had given of his best, and we were none of us complaining as we wended our way homewards.



Singing Bushlark

A full list of the birds seen on this trip is given below:

Sl #	Common Name	Scientific Name		Sl #	Common Name	Scientific Name
1	Lesser Whistling-Duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>		40	Little Stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
2	Comb Duck (Knob-billed Duck)	<i>Sarkidiornis melanotos</i>		41	Small Pratincole	<i>Glareola lactea</i>
3	Ruddy Shelduck (Brahminy Duck)	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>		42	Little Tern	<i>Sternula albifrons</i>
4	Indian Spot-billed Duck	<i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>		43	Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i>
5	Garganey	<i>Anas querquedula</i>		44	River Tern	<i>Sterna aurantia</i>
6	Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>		45	Spotted Dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>
7	Grey Francolin	<i>Francolinus pondicerianus</i>		46	Laughing Dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>
8	Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>		47	Asian Koel	<i>Eudynamis scolopaceus</i>
9	Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>		48	Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>
10	Painted Stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>		49	Asian Palm-Swift	<i>Cypsiurus balasiensis</i>
11	Indian Cormorant (Indian Shag)	<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>		50	Eurasian Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>
12	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>		51	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
13	Little Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>		52	White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>
14	Oriental Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>		53	Pied Kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
15	Spot-billed Pelican	<i>Pelecanus philippensis</i>		54	Green Bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>
16	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>		55	Coppersmith Barbet	<i>Psilopogon haemacephalus</i>
17	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>		56	Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>
18	Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>		57	Bay-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius vittatus</i>
19	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>		58	Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>
20	Eastern/Western Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>		59	House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
21	Indian PondHeron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>		60	Singing Bushlark	<i>Mirafra cantillans</i>
22	Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>		61	Ashy-crowned Sparrowlark	<i>Eremopterix griseus</i>
23	Black-headed Ibis	<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>		62	Dusky Crag Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne concolor</i>
24	Red-naped Ibis (Indian Black Ibis)	<i>Pseudibis papillosa</i>		63	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
25	Eurasian Spoonbill	<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>		64	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>
26	Eurasian MarshHarrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>		65	Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>
27	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>		66	Ashy Prinia	<i>Prinia socialis</i>
28	Brahminy Kite	<i>Haliastur indus</i>		67	Large Grey Babbler	<i>Turdoides malcolmi</i>
29	Grey-headed Swampphen (Purple Swampphen)	<i>Porphyrio poliocephalus</i>		68	Indian Robin	<i>Copsychus fulicatus</i>
30	Indian Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		69	Pied Bushchat	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>
31	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>		70	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
32	Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>		71	Purple-rumped Sunbird	<i>Leptocoma zeylonica</i>
33	Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>		72	Purple Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris asiaticus</i>
34	Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>		73	Western Yellow Wagtail (Blue-headed)	<i>Motacilla flava flava/beema</i>
35	Little Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>		74	Citrine Wagtail	<i>Motacilla citreola</i>
36	Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>		75	White-browed Wagtail	<i>Motacilla maderaspatensis</i>
37	Common Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>		76	Paddyfield Pipit	<i>Anthus rufulus</i>
38	Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i>		77	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
39	Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>		78	Scaly-breasted Munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>

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Bird of the Month

Text and photo: Umesh Mani

Brown Hawk-owl (*Ninox scutulata*)



Brown Hawk-owl (Chennai, 21-03-2015)

Order: Strigiformes
Family: Strigidae
Genus: *Ninox*
Species: *N. scutulata*
Size: 32 cm

Description & distribution: Also known as the Brown Boobook, the Brown Hawk-owl is a resident breeding owl across most of its range, which extends across most parts of tropical South Asia from the Middle East to India, Sri Lanka, western Indonesia and South China.

It is a medium-sized member of the Strigidae family, which is a group of 'typical' owls (as opposed to the other group, 'barn' owls). Its long, barred tail and lack of clear facial disk gives it a hawk-like appearance, hence the name. The eyes are large and yellow, upperparts are brown, and underparts are whitish with

reddish-brown streaking. The Andaman sub-species, however, has dark brown underparts.

Habitat & behaviour: The Brown Hawk-owl is usually found in well-wooded country and forests. It is nocturnal; during the day it tends to stay put at its roost, allowing fairly close approaches without flying away. At roost, it can sometimes be located by the small birds that tend to mob it. Its diet consists mainly of frogs, lizards, mice, large insects and small birds. The call, a repetitive, soft, musical *oo-uk oo-uk*, can usually be heard at dawn and dusk. It is quite common in cities and suburbs, close to buildings.

Nesting: The Brown Hawk-owl breeds from May to July. It nests in tree holes, and lays a brood of about 3 to 5 eggs.

Local name: The Brown Hawk Owl is known as '*chughad basra*' in Hindi, '*pagadigante vestam*' in Telugu, and '*chinna aandai*' in Tamil.

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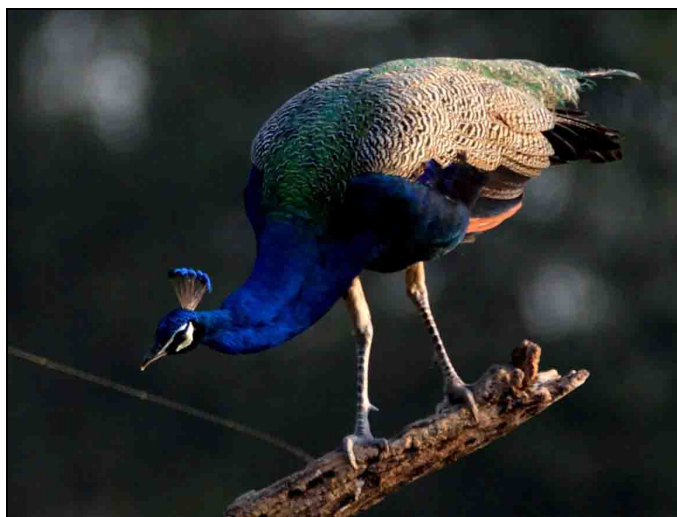
Editors: Shanti Mani, Umesh Mani

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For information, write to: Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh, PO Box 45, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad – 500034. **E-group:** http://groups.google.co.in/group/bsap_online. **Website:** www.bsap.in. **Society membership** (in Rs.): Annual: 500 per annum; Student: 200 per annum; Corporate: 2000 per annum; Life: 3000. (Add Rs 75 for outstation cheques.)

Trip Report – Nehru Zoological Park, May 16, 2016

Dr Jayati Mitra



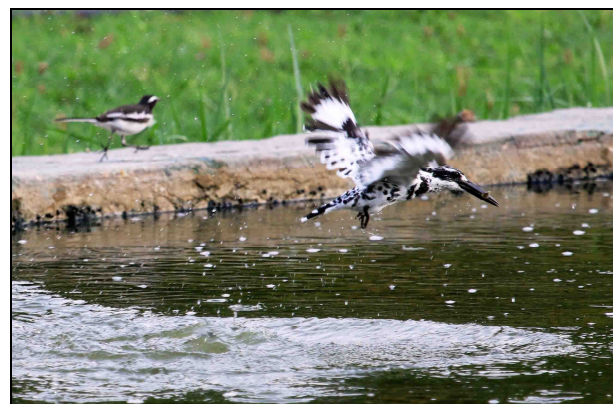
Indian Peafowl (Photo: Dheeraj Chavadi)

The Nehru Zoological Park, with its lush green lawns, interspersed with tall trees and surrounded by swamps and water bodies, is a natural haven for the local species as well as migratory birds. After a long spell of harsh summer, the recent thundershowers had lowered the temperature considerably. This trip was planned on a Monday morning to enable us to study the birds without the usual cacophony created by the surging crowd on other days.

The weather was partially cloudy, with a cool breeze blowing steadily. As we reached the gates, it was a pleasant surprise to be greeted by a group of bright smiling kids who had taken the pains to wake up early and had accompanied their parents to pursue their hobby.

At the entrance, cute electric cars were lined up to take us around the zoo. We saw Pale-billed Flowerpeckers (*Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*) chirping and flying around atop the trees near the gate. We moved along and turned towards the nearby pond. The *gulmohar* trees lined along the roadside were in full bloom creating a red hue along the whole stretch. Slowly the fence of the nearby pond became visible, and we stepped out of the car and walked towards the pond.

A flock of Yellow-billed Babblers (*Turdoides affinis*) were hopping and foraging on the ground, but as we looked over the fence we noticed a Pied Kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis*) sitting quietly at the edge of the pond looking intently into the water.



Pied Kingfisher (Photo: Dr Samuel Sukumar)

Suddenly it took off and flew towards the centre of the pond, and started hovering over the water. Its wings rapidly moved in circular motions while it, seemingly, remained fixed at the spot in mid-air till it dived vertically, splashing into the water to catch a silvery fish within its beak. It flew back swiftly to its original position, where it ate the prized catch, relishing every bit. The same feat was repeated several times in different directions by the bird that was never to miss its target till it was fully satiated. Birders never seem to tire of this scene; everyone enjoyed the action till the end.



Rose-ringed Parakeet (Photo: Dheeraj Chavadi)

As the sun came out from between the clouds, a flock of Rose-ringed Parakeets (*Psittacula krameri*) flew up in the bright sky, chattering continuously. An Oriental Magpie Robin (*Copsychus saularis*) foraged on the ground while an Indian Grey Hornbill (*Ocyrceros birostris*) also showed its presence in flight.

We stopped by the swamp where a pair of Black-crowned Night Herons (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) was sitting still. Observing the red eyes of these birds was a pleasure.



Black-crowned Night Heron (Photo: Dr Samuel Sukumar)

Nearby in the shady canopy of the tamarind tree, a Spotted Owlet (*Athene brama*) was seen moving deeper and deeper inside the foliage till it disappeared from our view.



Spotted Owlet (Photo: Dr Samuel Sukumar)

A broken stump on the other side caught our attention. In full view was a Coppersmith Barbet (*Megalaima haemacephala*) building its nest. Its long claws gripped the trunk firmly as it dug its beak in and rocked its head from side to side while digging the hole. From time to time it crossed over to the opposite side, observed the nest and returned back to work, trying to make it perfectly round.



Streaked Weaver (Photo: Dheeraj Chavadi)

In the adjacent bulrushes, a colony of Streaked Weavers (*Ploceus manyar*) were very active. A nest looking like a neatly woven basket was clearly visible. Quite a few birds were in their breeding plumage, their intense yellow heads glistening in the sunlight. Yellow (*Ixobrychus sinensis*) and Cinnamon Bitterns (*Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*) were flying overhead. The latter was also seen resting for a while on the distant palms.



Lesser Whistling-duck (Photo: Dheeraj Chavadi)

In the water body, Lesser Whistling-duck (*Dendrocygna javanica*) were resting in the shallow waters while Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*), Purple Swampphen (*Porphyrio porphyrio*), Bronze-winged Jacanas (*Metopidius indicus*) and a lone Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*) waded along the bank.



White-breasted Waterhen (Photo: Dr Samuel Sukumar)

As we arrived near the peacock enclosure it was a pleasure to see the Black-rumped Flameback (*Dinopium benghalense*) in flight. Indian Golden Orioles (*Oriolus kundoo*) and Black Drongos (*Dicrurus macrocercus*) as usual were sighted flying near each other.

By now, we were moving towards the other side when a harsh call of *ke-ke-ke* was heard. A Rufous Treepie (*Dendrocitta vagabunda*) was diving down between the rocks frequently searching for insects.



Rufous Treepie (Photo: Dheeraj Chavadi)

The only raptor we could see was a Black Kite (*Milvus migrans*) perched on a distant branch. Maybe the clouds were a deterrent for these flying species.



Black Kite (Photo: Dheeraj Chavadi)

By this time we had circled towards the gate, when we sighted a brown-looking bird sitting on the fence. It was the Common Hawk Cuckoo (*Hierococyx varius*). It is a very pretty bird with a yellow ring around the eye and barring on its breast and tail. How beautifully it imitates the juvenile Shikra, except for its straight round bill. This bird is usually quite shy, though it continuously keeps calling in a crescendo which sounds like the words 'brain fever'. Like other cuckoos, it lays its eggs in other birds' nests. Today it was oblivious of our presence and kept on flying up and down, feeding on insects present on the ground.

The kids got absorbed looking at the caged birds in the zoo and naturally the often-asked question came to my mind; is it right to keep birds in captivity, and do they miss their natural surroundings? But sometimes it is necessary to do this, for studying their habits and also for breeding in captivity, especially if the species is an endangered one.



Painted Stork (Photo: Dheeraj Chavadi)

By now we were back again at the gate and slowly one by one we dispersed, hoping to meet again at another place soon.

A list of the species seen is given below:

Sl. No.	Common Name	Scientific Name	Sl. No.	Common Name	Scientific Name
1	Pale-billed Flowerpecker	Dicaeum erythrorhynchos	23	Bronze-winged Jacana	Metopidius indicus
2	House Crow	Corvus splendens	24	Yellow Bittern	Ixobrychus sinensis
3	Common Myna	Acridotheres tristis	25	Indian Pond Heron	Ardeola grayii
4	Pied Kingfisher	Ceryle rudis	26	Black Kite	Milvus migrans
5	White-throated Kingfisher	Halcyon smyrnensis	27	Clamorous Reed Warbler	Acrocephalus stentoreus
6	Black-crowned Night Heron	Nycticorax nycticorax	28	Grey Heron	Ardea cinerea
7	Purple Heron	Ardea purpurea	29	Great Egret	Casmerodius albus
8	Indian Grey Hornbill	Ocyrceros birostris	30	Oriental Magpie Robin	Copsychus saularis
9	Rose-ringed Parakeet	Psittacula krameri	31	Yellow-billed Babbler	Turdoides affinis
10	Spotted Dove	Stigmatopelia chinensis	32	White-breasted Waterhen	Amaurornis phoenicurus
11	Red-wattled Lapwing	Vanellus indicus	33	Spotted Owlet	Athene brama
12	White-browed Wagtail	Motacilla maderaspatensis	34	Black-rumped Flameback	Dinopium benghalense
13	Coppersmith Barbet	Megalaima haemacephala	35	Black Drongo	Dicrurus macrocercus
14	Indian Peafowl	Pavo cristatus	36	Rufous Treepie	Dendrocitta vagabunda
15	Common Moorhen	Gallinula chloropus	37	Common Hawk Cuckoo	Hierococcyx varius
16	Purple Swampfen	Porphyrio porphyrio	38	Black-winged Stilt	Himantopus himantopus
17	Streaked Weaver	Ploceus manyar	39	Cattle Egret	Bubulcus ibis
18	Lesser Whistling-duck	Dendrocygna javanica	40	Little Cormorant	Phalacrocorax niger
19	Indian Spot-billed Duck	Anas poecilorhyncha	41	Greater Coucal	Centropus sinensis
20	Cinnamon Bittern	Ixobrychus cinnamomeus	42	Indian Golden Oriole	Oriolus kundoo
21	Asian Koel	Eudynamis scolopaceus	43	Red-vented Bulbul	Pycnonotus cafer
22	Ashy Prinia	Prinia socialis			

* * *

Birding for Life!

Srikanth Bhamidipati

“Bring nature to life” - whenever I hear these words, the one thing which comes to my mind is birding! Do it in your yard or hike through the bushes or cross the streams, birding can be comforting and can also give you the adrenaline rush which many people crave. Birding can be done by anyone, anywhere; you just need to have some inclination towards the activity, and it will enrich your lifestyle and your perception of the world.

There are many benefits of birding, one of them being connecting with new people or with your loved ones. Birding as a family activity is known to improve the quality of relationships in the family. In the daily hustle and bustle of the concrete jungle, where every relationship is tested from time to time, birding provides a means to connect with your loved ones and spend some quality time together.

And you know what: birding has health benefits too! Through bird-watching you get out in the open and get to breathe some fresh air. I'm sure everyone is aware of how Vitamin-D is synthesized in our body in the presence of sunlight. Strolling during bird walks is a great exercise and helps us reduce stress levels in our bodies. The psychological training to learn new things contributes to enhanced growth of the brain. Recognising bird species, learning about their physical features, understanding their habits and habitat and collectively binding them to memory, is an intellectual activity which improves our focus and increases

the overall brain power. Last but not the least, the good, real, unrestrained, hearty laughs we have during our conversations relieves anger, tension and hostility by over 80%!

Birding benefits children too. Children are naturally inquisitive and love to absorb new things. Through bird-watching, we can get them outdoors and away from their mobiles, computers, I-pads and Gameboys! Backyard birding is the best place to start with kids; understanding which birds are visiting our backyards and studying their behaviour is easy. Inspiring them to build habitats for birds, designing a bird bath or building a feeder and planting a few trees will not only make a difference in the environment, it will be good learning for the kids, and others, to preserve nature. What a birding enthusiast needs – the patience to stand quietly, and the readiness to accept what comes his way – are also important life skills.

Birding is quickly becoming one of India's most popular interests and has enthusiasts spanning all age groups, from the fledglings to the senior citizens. This activity can be indulged in by everyone: all you need to do is start watching (whether out in the field or from your own window). This growing interest in birding can help conserve habitat. Regular participation in our local birding activities helps us connect with different people from diverse backgrounds, as well as understand bird behaviour, a fascinating subject.

Data submitted to organizations like eBird, BNHS and other such organizations helps in assessing the density of the bird populations and species trends for the region. This data acts as a basis for drafting different conservation plans, and helps execute them efficiently. It, therefore, follows that one has to be responsible when documenting and sending data, which will help the analysts and the planners to draft conservation strategies effectively.

Our lives are so hectic and crammed with tension that it is essential for us to spend time unwinding, every now and then. As the famous saying goes, "*Birds of a feather flock together*". So let's head out, socialize and participate in bird-watching events.

Watch birds... they make you look up! Happy Birding!

* * *

The Story of the Home-maker

Text and photos: Col S S Cheema (Retd)



Baya Weaver with nesting material

I will start this with a disclaimer – a home-builder and a home-maker are not the same. The home-builder constructs the home – brick by brick or, as in our story, thread by thread – the home-maker makes this place a home. Today I will talk about one such home-maker...

My fascination for Baya Weavers is not new. I remember, as a kid, looking up at these beautiful nests in trees – sometimes carrying one home to make it a piece of my decoration. Several times I wondered why the nests were usually abandoned when I saw them. It was only by observing these beautiful birds over many years that I understood the entire process.

When I say beautiful, I mean every letter of the word! Without rubbing our lady readers on the wrong side, the word 'beauty' is more apt to males in the bird world than to the ladies, hence to start where I left off – the BEAUTIFUL males carry yellow crowns and yellow breasts, with black masks over their faces.

The breeding starts with the arrival of monsoons. The males attain their yellow breeding plumage at approximately one-and-a-half years of age, and start looking for places to build the nest. Though the nests have sometimes been found at isolated places, the birds as a rule build nests in colonies of 15 to 20. There are some very strict rules governing the colony – the nests are generally on the eastern side of the tree – perhaps saving them from the punishing winds of the South-west monsoons. If the colony is established on trees of lower height, they are generally built where they hang over water, and are not so easy to approach. Thorny bushes are also preferred locations for the low colonies. The colony also has to be near a source of 'building material' and wet mud. If the colony is established on tall trees, then the thorny bush clause is struck off, with the tall palm trees

being preferred.

After the colony location is shortlisted and approved by the house of majority, the males are a flurry of activity. They choose the branch where the new house is to be built and they get that first thin strip of reed to make the knot. Each thread, stripped and incorporated into the nest, is 20 to 60 cm long. The male takes almost 18 days to build the nest, making up to 500 trips to complete one. The first knot takes time and I have seen many a male struggling, making multiple attempts. After this the male makes multiple trips to get one string at a time and weave it to make the nest.

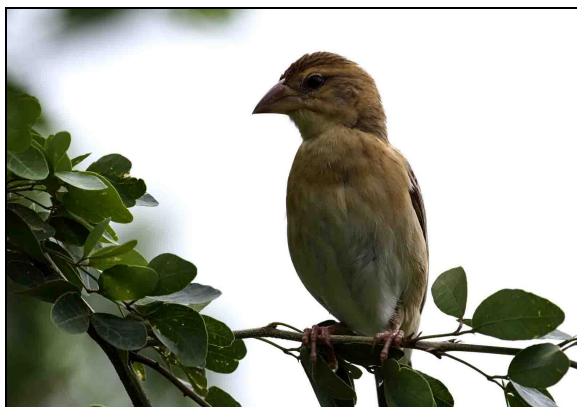


Baya Weaver (Male) with incomplete nest

With the nest just about 1/4th done – the male starts advertising the property – after all, if he sells the house right, he gets the home-maker! The females – not unlike our species – observe from a distance and come near the colony from time to time in a group. Whenever females approach the colony, it is a flurry of activity again – the males chirp at the top of their voices to attract a mate, making full show of the plumage, hanging from their (own) nests. Many a times the nests are not approved of and the female tears it from the base, letting it fall to the ground. This treatment is meted out even to nests that are almost complete or fully complete. The male has no choice but to start all over again. This continues till the nest is complete and a lady bird approves of it.

female, the inner layers are done almost exclusively by the female. She lines it with mud and other soft material, converting this nest to a home.

Recently, acknowledging that the Weavers' numbers have dwindled over the years, BNHS initiated a count across the country. I am writing this article to acknowledge these tiny birds that, because of human greed and intervention, are being pushed to a stage where they are becoming rarer and more difficult to see and admire. It would be unfortunate if the next generation did not get to see this magical home-building in nature.

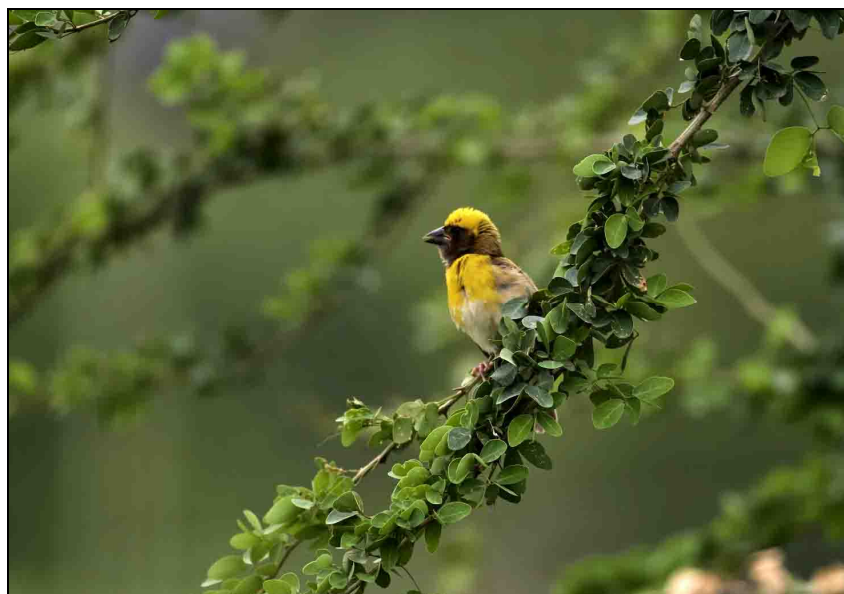


Baya Weaver (Female)

The nests are pendulous with a retort shape and a long, vertical tube that leads to the nesting chamber. The nests are weighed down or lined with dung or mud. Adding weight at the right places gives it more stability. Once the nest is chosen by the



Baya Weaver (Male) with completed nest



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Bird of the Month

Text: Umesh Mani; Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati

Oriental Scops Owl (*Otus sunia*)



Oriental Scops Owl (Mallelatheertham, Srisailam District, 29-05-2016)

Order: Strigiformes
Family: Strigidae
Genus: *Otus*
Species: *O. sunia*
Size: 18-21 cm

Description & distribution: The Oriental Scops Owl is found from North Pakistan eastwards across India and Nepal, and from Japan to eastern Siberia, Manchuria, eastern China, Taiwan, the Malay Peninsula, Sri Lanka and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. It is fairly common in most parts of its range, but is more often heard than seen.

It is a small owl, around the same size as a Spotted Owlet. There are two morphs, rufous and grey, but intermediate forms are also known to occur. The rufous morph shows a pale rufous facial disc, with a narrow dark rim, and the blackish-grey bill shows a little white around the base. It has yellow eyes with white eyebrows. It has a smudged rufous, black and white collar on its hindneck. The upperparts are quite plain rufous, with dark streaking on forehead and crown; the scapulars sport whitish-buff spots with blackish edges. The underparts are somewhat pale black/dark grey, turning to buffish-white towards the belly. Neck and breast feathers have dark shaft-streaks with fine horizontal vermiculations, giving a faint 'herringbone' appearance. It has tarsi feathered till the greyish-brown toes; claws are blackish-brown. The wings and tail are banded.

The grey morph, on the other hand, is more spotted/streaked above, while the underparts are similar to the rufous morph, except with brownish- or reddish-grey ground colour. The sexes are alike in both morphs, but females are usually heavier than males.

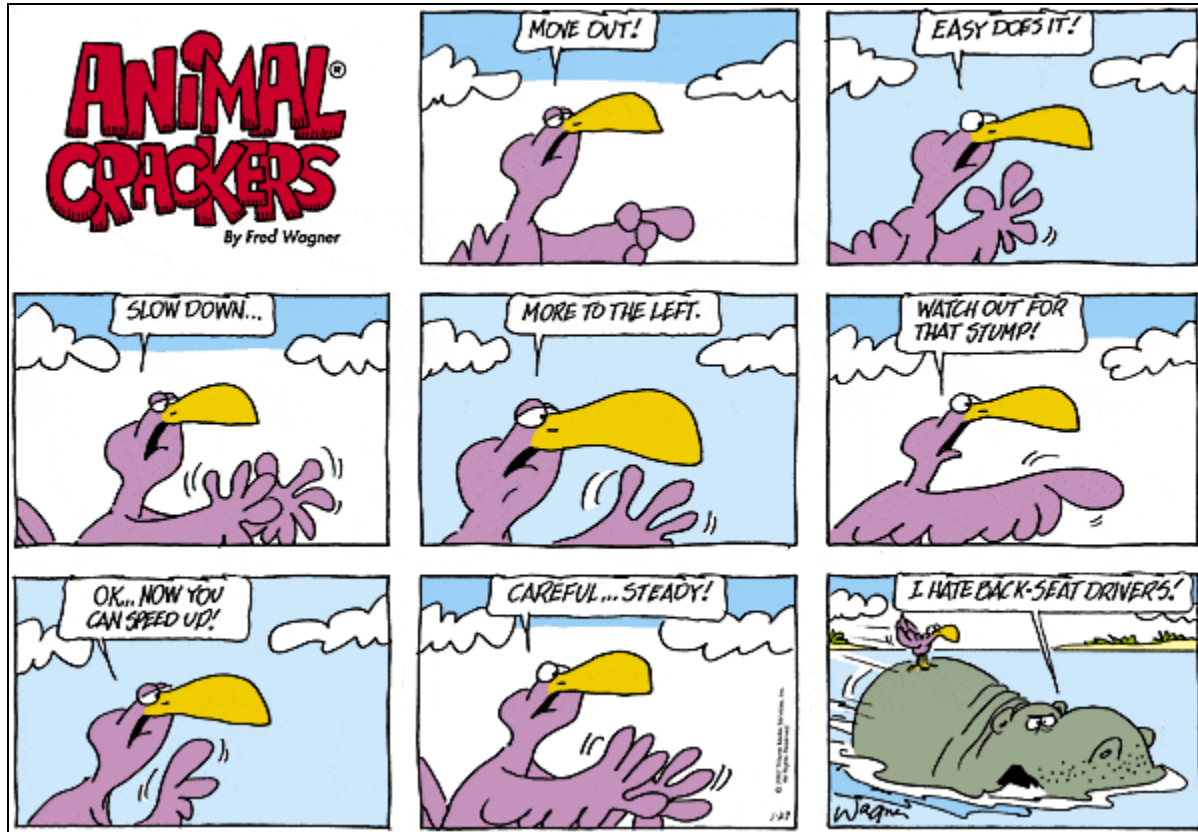
Habitat & behaviour: The Oriental Scops Owl is usually found in open or partially open woodland, parks, grasslands with scattered trees, and riverside forest patches. It is a nocturnal bird; roosting singly, and occasionally in small groups, in dense foliage or tree holes, during the day, and becoming active after dusk. It may hunt either from a perch or in flight. Its diet consists mainly of insects and spiders, though it may occasionally take small vertebrates. Its call is a three-syllable sequence of throaty *tuk-tuk-turuk*, with the rhythm fairly variable in different parts of its range.

Nesting: The Oriental Scops Owl breeds from February to May, usually in holes in walls or trees, though it has been known to use nesting boxes. Pairs may sing in duets during courtship. The 3 to 4 white eggs are usually incubated by the female, while the male provides food during the period.

Local name: The Oriental Scops Owl is known as '*bharati chuggad*' in Gujarati, '*chitta guba*' or '*yerra chitta guba*' in Telugu, and '*chinna aandai*' in Tamil.

* * *

Bird Humour



(Animal Crackers by Fred Wagner, 27-01-2002)

For Private Circulation Only

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Newsletter of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh
New Series Volume 13 Number 8 August 2016

FIELD OUTING: Sunday, 21st August 2016: Narsapur Reserve Forest. Meeting point: Punjagutta (opp. Mangatrai Pearls), 6.00AM.

Always a dependable birding location, the beauty and bird richness of the verdant Narsapur Forest would be much-enhanced by the recent rains. This would be a half-day trip. Carry water and breakfast. For further details and to co-ordinate, please contact Ms Surekha Aitabathula (99490-38532).

**INDOOR MEETING: THE LIFE OF BIRDS: Episode-1: To Fly Or Not To Fly
Wednesday, 17th August 2016, 6.00PM: Goethe-zentrum Hyderabad, 20 Journalist's Colony, Road No. 3, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad – 500 034.** (For directions, please contact 94905-09251 or 040-65526443/23350040)

Birds have fascinated us right from the dawn of history. Birds have been depicted as symbols of power in many an ancient civilization. In this first episode of the famous documentary series, THE LIFE OF BIRDS, Richard Attenborough takes you through a thoroughly enjoyable exploration into the secret lives of birds.

A Paradise called Kangra Valley

Text and photos: Chandra Sekhar Bandi



Kalij Pheasant

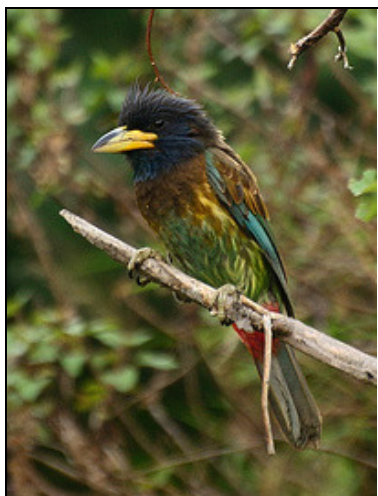
Rolling on my bed, I waited for my alarm to ring. I was aware of the daybreak and was tempted to peep out of the window, but I chose to wait for my alarm, for it is precise and sweet! The Bulbuls started their social singing and the sparrows too joined the party, but I waited for my alarm, for it is pleasant and melodious. A few minutes later, I rejoiced as I heard a sweet “tee... tee... tee... teet... teen” alarm repeated multiple times. An alarm that glues me to the bed, wanting to hear more; an alarm that had me in paradise; one that left an unforgettable impression... the alarm is the sweet song of Asian Paradise-flycatcher (*Terpsiphone paradisi*).

I have been birding since a few years, and I had seen, and heard the harsh call of, a Paradise-flycatcher many times. However, I

had never heard its beautiful song until one of them decided to hang around our bedroom window for two months. I was fortunate to spend three carefree months with my family in a small village called Rakkar, near Dharamshala, at the foothills of Dhauladhar range of Himalayas in Himachal Pradesh. Waking up looking at snow peaks out of your bedroom window while listening to the song of the Paradise-flycatcher is one of the memorable experiences of our lives.

From May to July, 2016, I spent time doing casual birding at multiple locations in the valley at a variety of altitudes, spellbound by the experiences and sights. Here are some of those experiences...

Kangra Valley in Himachal Pradesh lies right below the western Himalayan (Dhauladhar) ranges, nourished by multiple glacial rivers and perennial streams, thus creating a variety of habitats. The sharp and seemingly abrupt rise of mountains results in a huge altitude variance within a short distance. More than 550 species of birds have been recorded here, thus providing one an opportunity to see higher-altitude birds as well as those of the plains. The altitude ranges from 600m to 3000m or so. While the higher elevations host Deodar, Pine and Rhododendron forests, the lower altitudes have terraced farms, multiple stretches of lowland and riverine forests. The Pong Dam, that apparently hosts 20% of the world's population of Bar-headed Geese, besides other wetlands species, lies in this valley.



Great Barbet

The arrival of summer in this part of the world is announced by the two Barbets that go on a singing spree. The Great Barbet (*Psilopogon virens*), with its loud call, is a clear winner, but its lesser cousin, the Blue-throated Barbet (*Psilopogon asiaticus*) is no less vocal.



Blue-throated Barbet

The Yellow-billed Magpie and Blue Whistling Thrushes are the boldest and most frequently seen birds close to human habitation. Himalayan Bulbuls (*Pycnonotus leucogenys*), Russet Sparrow

(*Passer rutilans*) and House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) are widely seen at lower altitudes. The Slaty-headed Parakeets (*Psittacula himalayana*), identified easily by the golden-yellow tail-tips, go on their morning and evening sojourns in groups, and it's a sight to watch them fly together flashing the yellow tail-tips. Besides, a group of Plum-headed Parakeets (*Psittacula cyanocephala*) and Rose-ringed Parakeets (*Psittacula krameri*) were "regulars" on my morning walks.

One fortunate day, I stretched my morning hike a little further as I saw big birds circling and swooping down. Oh boy, I was never so glad to see/smell a dead animal! At the turn of the road, I saw nothing less than 30 Himalayan (*Gyps himalayensis*) and Eurasian Griffons (*Gyps fulvus*) finishing off what appeared like some dead cattle left by villagers. I maintained my distance though the vultures never appeared deterred by my presence. For the next 30 minutes or so, I could watch closely - their mighty wings, their funny walk, short flight, swooping down actions. It made for a wonderful memory. Not sure about the vultures, but I returned home content! Later, I learned that they were nesting up the hill near a small village at around 1700m, and I regularly spotted them from the luxury of our balcony. Watching them use the thermals and fly high with the snow-clad peaks in the background is a birdwatcher's delight.



Himalayan & Eurasian Griffons

Being a regular on the same path has its advantages. Within a few days, I could predict the regular perches of some of the birds. I knew the Asian Barred Owl's (*Glaucidium cuculoides*) regular haunt, the Great Barbet's nest, the Plumbeous Water Redstarts' (*Phoenicurus fuliginosus*) favourite rock, to name few. It was interesting to watch the Ashy Drongo (*Dicrurus leucophaeus*) and Verditer Flycatcher (*Eumyias thalassinus*) in their breeding zones, instead of down South in their wintering grounds.

On another occasion, a lone Brown Wood Owl (*Strix leptogrammica*) surprised me by flying out of nowhere after being chased out of a pine forest by jungle crows. On another morning, I could count 6 pairs of Paradise-flycatchers within a 1-km stretch, the maximum I had ever seen in a walk. Three such pairs within a minute doubled my delight. At times, we used to spot them perched on wires, right outside our kitchen window overlooking the valley - a view my wife remembers fondly.



European Goldfinch

Mornings had their charm and surprises too. On one occasion, two European Goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*) turned up, giving enough time for me to capture a decent picture before disappearing, never to be seen again. A Yellow-breasted Greenfinch (*Chloris spinoides*) sighting on another day lit up the morning hike. Another pleasant memory was added by the Common Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*), which lived up to its name. For days on end, we kept hearing the *cuckoo-cuckoo* calls and on one occasion, before the sun was out fully, one of them offered a peek-a-boo whilst sunning out!



Common Cuckoo

Talk about patience in birding makes me recollect two species. The path I used to take for my morning hikes criss-crossed many streams and rivulets. Several times, I got a glimpse of the secretive Forktails that fly off in a jiffy. After a lot of trial and errors, I figured out the formula to see one - start early - stay quiet near the stream - hope and pray that a Forktail turns up! Another species that made me follow it for 20 minutes just to get a glimpse was a pair of aptly-named Black-chinned Babblers (*Cyanoderma pyrrhops*) - a little bird and a memorable lifer.

Dharamshala town offers great birding and there is no better place than the bus-stand to start with. As one gets off a bus, a quick peek into the valley next to the bus stand can reward you with a sighting of an Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) or a Bearded Vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*)! Right above

Dharamshala, McLeodganj, the holy town of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, can get crowded during summer; however, upper Dharamkot, and the hike to Gallu Devi Temple and further to Triund Peak, is wonderful for birding. Upper Dharamkot bestowed me with a lifer in the Bar-tailed Treecreeper (*Certhia himalayana*) - what an amazing camouflage it had! On a day trip with family, we spotted the Rufous Sibia (*Heterophasia capistrata*) and the Black-headed Jay (*Garrulus lanceolatus*) from the hotel at Gallu Devi Temple, and the lady who runs the hotel showed us photos of the wonderful birds she gets to see from her balcony during winter, as the birds move down to lower altitudes. Her husband promised to show us a Himalayan Monal in winter, and I returned vowing to return!



Black-headed Jay

One of the fascinating experiences for me was to witness how the birds vary with altitude. For instance, the Cinereous Tit (*Parus cinereus*), found till 1200m, is replaced by the Green-backed Tit (*Parus monticolus*) as one gains altitude. While I could spot the Verditer Flycatcher at 2800m as well, the Parakeets were not seen beyond 1800m. Lower altitudes gave me the Alexandrine Parakeet (*Psittacula eupatria*) and Rose-ringed Parakeet - that completed 4 varieties of parakeets in the region.

Monsoons in Himachal kick off in late June or early July, and they bring along an interesting transformation in the landscape. The play of clouds and snow caps, the terraced paddy fields, the on-and-off rains - one can sit back and enjoy the magic of clouds, mountains and rain. The transformation is dramatic for birds too - all of a sudden, the Vultures are not to be seen, and the Parakeets seem to have moved to the plains or lower altitudes.

You would also notice nesting activity all around you. Hair-crested Drongos (*Dicrurus hottentottus*), Great Barbets, Oriental Magpie-robin (*Copsychus saularis*), Himalayan Black Bulbul (*Hypsipetes leucocephalus*) and Indian Robin (*Copsychus fulicatus*), to name a few, were spotted nesting and carrying food for young ones. Butterflies abounded and fireflies lit the nights. Watching the mass movement of emigrants in their thousands added to our great memories.

On another occasion, curiosity got the better of me and I stretched my regular hike further to gain another 300m altitude. A Kalij Pheasant (*Lophura leucomelanos*) decided to surprise me, while a noisy Striated Prinia (*Prinia crinigera*) gave company, and a group of Streaked Laughingthrushes (*Trochalopteron lineatum*) popped up. On one bike birding trip, we spotted a dozen Black-throated Tits (*Aegithalos concinnus*) flying off from a tree, and a pair of Black-winged Kites (*Elanus caeruleus*) overlooking a terraced farmland.

The villagers of Rakkar, where we stayed, belong to the Gaddi community, and are traditionally shepherds and excellent hikers. I joined them on one of the meadow hikes, where they leave the cattle for three months. Heavy rain washed off any sightings except a glimpse of a Thrush and a Pipit, but the memories of that hike with beautiful flowers and amazing plants inspires me to go back and try to sight those beauties again.

This little paradise has so much to offer that I returned with many unexplored locations on my list - Pong Dam is one such - besides some high altitude hikes, Bir and Billing (famous for paragliding) and Palampur, to name a few. Early or late winter apparently offers the best birding opportunities and decent weather, if one wishes to visit.

I must thank my family for being supportive of this mad adventure, and for joining the fun. Whoever said the call of

mountains is strong, I could not agree more, especially when you have wonderful birds and the wonders of Mother Nature for company.

Stay options:

1. Dharamshala has many hotels, but during the tourist season it can get crowded. I recommend a village named Dharamkot in Upper Dharamshala, that has homestays that charge you as low as Rs200 per person per day, for stay (exclusive of food).

2. Gallu Devi Temple premises has 3 decent hotels with great views, which serve as a starting/ending point of the trek to Triund Peak of Dhauladhars.

3. Those who prefer a village-home stay experience can also check sites like Ghoomakad (<http://ghoomakad.in/>) - we rented a house through them for two-and-a-half months, and had a great time.

Reference: The Birds of Kangra, a comprehensive guide to birds of this region meticulously documented by Jan Willem den Besten

<http://www.sanctuaryasia.com/component/content/article/569-book-reviews/1224-birds-of-kangra.html>

A list of birds that I could identify:

Sl. No.	Common Name	Scientific Name	Sl. No.	Common Name	Scientific Name
1	Red Junglefowl	<i>Gallus gallus</i>	23	Green Bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>
2	Kalij Pheasant	<i>Lophura leucomelanos</i>	24	Great Barbet	<i>Psilopogon virens</i>
3	Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	25	Blue-throated Barbet	<i>Psilopogon asiaticus</i>
4	Black-winged Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	26	Speckled Piculet	<i>Picumnus innominatus</i>
5	Himalayan Griffon	<i>Gyps himalayensis</i>	27	Brown-fronted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos auriceps</i>
6	Eurasian Griffon	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	28	Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos macei</i>
7	Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>	29	Grey-headed Woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>
8	Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	30	Alexandrine Parakeet	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>
9	Red-wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>	31	Rose-ringed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>
10	Rock Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	32	Slaty-headed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula himalayana</i>
11	Oriental Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>	33	Plum-headed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula cyanocephala</i>
12	Red Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia tranquebarica</i>	34	Bay-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius vittatus</i>
13	Spotted Dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>	35	Long-tailed Shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>
14	Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon	<i>Treron sphenurus</i>	36	Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>
15	Common Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	37	Ashy Drongo	<i>Dicrurus leucophaeus</i>
16	Grey-bellied Cuckoo	<i>Cacomantis passerinus</i>	38	Hair-crested Drongo	<i>Dicrurus hottentottus</i>
17	Asian Koel	<i>Eudynamys scolopaceus</i>	39	White-throated Fantail	<i>Rhipidura albicollis</i>
18	Asian Barred Owlet	<i>Glaucidium cuculoides</i>	40	Asian Paradise-flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>
19	Brown Wood Owl	<i>Strix leptogrammica</i>	41	Black-headed Jay	<i>Garrulus lanceolatus</i>
20	Common Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	42	Yellow-billed Blue Magpie	<i>Urocissa flavirostris</i>
21	Indian Grey Hornbill	<i>Ocyrceros birostris</i>	43	House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
22	White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>	44	Indian/Eastern Jungle Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>

Sl. No.	Common Name	Scientific Name	Sl. No.	Common Name	Scientific Name
45	Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica</i>	66	Indian Robin	<i>Copsychus fulicatus</i>
46	Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher	<i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>	67	Oriental Magpie-robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>
47	Green-backed Tit	<i>Parus monticolus</i>	68	Verditer Flycatcher	<i>Eumyias thalassinus</i>
48	Cinereous Tit	<i>Parus cinereus</i>	69	Blue Whistling Thrush	<i>Myophonus caeruleus</i>
49	Black-lored Tit	<i>Machlolophus xanthogenys</i>	70	Spotted Forktail	<i>Enicurus maculatus</i>
50	Black-throated Tit	<i>Aegithalos concinnus</i>	71	Plumbeous Water Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus fuliginosus</i>
51	White-tailed Nuthatch	<i>Sitta himalayensis</i>	72	Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>
52	Bar-tailed Treecreeper	<i>Certhia himalayana</i>	73	Pied Bushchat	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>
53	Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>	74	Grey Bushchat	<i>Saxicola ferreus</i>
54	Red-whiskered Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>	75	Brahminy Starling	<i>Sturnia pagodarum</i>
55	Himalayan Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus leucogenys</i>	76	Chestnut-tailed Starling	<i>Sturnia malabarica</i>
56	Himalayan Black Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes leucocephalus</i>	77	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
57	Greenish Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>	78	Jungle Myna	<i>Acridotheres fuscus</i>
58	Grey-hooded Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus xanthoschistos</i>	79	Fire-breasted Flowerpecker	<i>Dicaeum ignipectus</i>
59	Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>	80	Purple Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris asiaticus</i>
60	Striated Prinia	<i>Prinia crinigera</i>	81	Crimson Sunbird	<i>Aethopyga siparaja</i>
61	Ashy Prinia	<i>Prinia socialis</i>	82	Yellow-breasted Greenfinch	<i>Chloris spinoides</i>
62	Oriental White-eye	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>	83	European Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>
63	Black-chinned Babbler	<i>Cyanoderma pyrrhops</i>	84	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
64	Streaked Laughingthrush	<i>Trochalopteron lineatum</i>	85	Russet Sparrow	<i>Passer rutilans</i>
65	Rufous Sibia	<i>Heterophasia capistrata</i>	86	Scaly-breasted Munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>

* * *

Malabar Trails

Text and photos: Srikanth Bhamidipati



White-cheeked Barbet

When your best friend calls you to visit him for a weekend and insists that we should go on a road trip, one should never say no! When this happened to me, I contemplated until the weekend arrived and, taking a last-minute decision to leave town, headed for Bengaluru.

After reaching my first pit-stop, which is Bengaluru, I met up with my friend, and we started driving to our destination Wayanad at 2.00AM along with his wife and a couple of friends.

Our next stop was the Mysore palace at 4.00AM; standing in front of the palace, which was all lit up, was nostalgic. After about 10 minutes, we resumed our journey towards Bandipur National Park and reached the gates by 6.00AM. This is where I was entering my fort, and coming back to this place almost after a year was an overwhelming experience. This is where, from the fast-forward mode of driving from Bangalore, I shifted to a slow-motion mode.

The first bird which greeted us at the entrance was a pair of Small Minivets, calling and playing together. But for me and one other friend, the rest were all handicapped when it comes to identifying birds - so it was a tough sell for me to get them interested in the birding, and I wanted to make it as interesting as possible. Climbing the hill, we saw a bird which my non-birder friends referred to as a woodpecker; I explained that it wasn't a woodpecker but rather an exceptional bird called the Common Hoopoe, which can survive in all kinds of terrain. A few feet away, we saw a few Spotted Deer and Sambhar.



Streak-throated Woodpecker

From the Forest Department office, we started our safari into the forest, and everyone enjoyed the beauty and amazing fragrance of the forest. The number of Streak-throated Woodpeckers was good - we saw at least 16-20 at different locations, and most of the time in pairs. There were Flycatchers, Bulbuls, Bee-eaters, Robins and many other birds, including a vulture-like bird far away, which I was sure was a Red-headed Vulture. Besides the birds, my friends were interested in the mammals, and were on the lookout for a tiger. No luck though - we just got a fresh pug-mark. The glimpse of a leopard sitting in the bushes with a kill was a good sight. Elephants having a sand bath, and a sighting of the Stripe-necked Mongoose, were indeed good sightings, besides the usual Indian Gaur.



Red-headed Vulture

After every safari, we can hear interesting things - a few people share their experiences, and a few are agitated at not being able

to see anything special. One such comment I heard was - "Didn't see a tiger, I just saw a pugmark... looks like someone has planted the pug-mark there." I wonder how people can expect to see all the animals in just one safari, without understanding the demographics of the animal and their behaviour. This motivates me to explain to them about animal behaviour - it's never too late to learn!



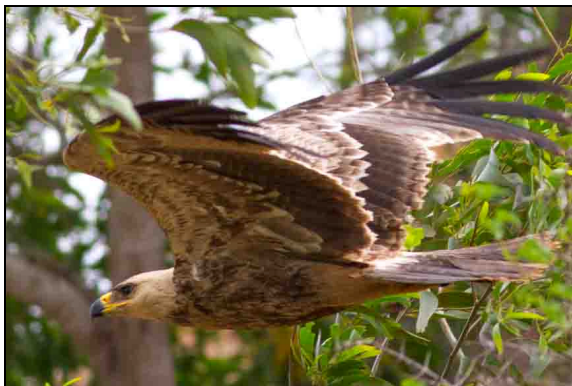
Dusky Crag Martin

After the safari, we decided to drive down till Mudumalai and thence return towards Wayanad. *En route*, we were lucky to spot some raptors, which we didn't see in the forest. First was a Crested Serpent Eagle, sitting in the open - probably enjoying a nice sun-bath. Next to show up was the Oriental Honey-buzzard, then the common raptors like Black-winged Kite and Brahminy Kite. Apart from the raptors, the bird life was pretty dull as there were only the other common species.



Black-eared Kite

On our way back we stopped for some breakfast and then decided to head to our resort in Wayanad - fatigue was catching up, and we wanted to rest for a while. A few kilometers out, I saw a bird with a red head sitting on a small hillock nearby. Flushing fatigue down the drain, we headed closer, and I started moving closer to the hillock on foot. I saw a few birds flying about, and started clicking all the birds in sight. I found Tawny Eagle (5), Red-headed Vulture (3), Black Kite (many), Black-eared Kite (4), Brahminy Kite (2) - and another bird which I identified as the Rufous-bellied Eagle. I was jumping with joy as I'd got a lifer, and made a few calls and informed all my friends about the sighting.



Tawny Eagle

Heading back towards Wayanad, another 3 hours of driving took us to Kalpetta, our destination. The location was just perfect, overlooking the Banasurasagar Dam.



White-bellied Woodpecker

I decided to call it a day for birding and spent some time with my friends. While checking the images later that night, I realized, much to my disappointment, that the bird I thought was the Rufous-bellied Eagle, was actually a Tawny Eagle – I was really sad at not being able to spot it.



Malabar Whistling Thrush

Next morning was a fresh start - I was woken up by the calls of Malabar Whistling Thrush and many other birds. Among all the calls, I heard one distinct call - that of the Wayanad Laughingthrush– unfortunately, due to the rain, I wasn't able to spot it.

Birding was difficult due to the rain, but I was still able to spot several good species like Black Eagle, Indian Paradise-flycatcher, White-cheeked Barbet, Yellow-browed Bulbul, Crimson-backed Sunbird, Jungle Myna, Yellow-footed Green Pigeon, Green Imperial Pigeon, some Cuckoos, Spotted Owlet, Malabar Trogon, and various common species.



Jungle Myna

After a sumptuous breakfast, my friends wanted me to take a few images for them. Having done that, we decided to head back to Bengaluru. As we were reaching our rooms, I spotted a Brahminy Kite flying past. After clicking a few images, I turned my head to see a bird flying just in front of my room. It looked like a large Shaheen Falcon - and to my joy I realised that it was none other than the Rufous-bellied Eagle! Finally able to spot the bird I so badly wanted to see, and click some good shots, my trip ended on a good note - which is when I realised that "Miracles do happen!"



Rufous-bellied Eagle

A list of birds seen on the trip:

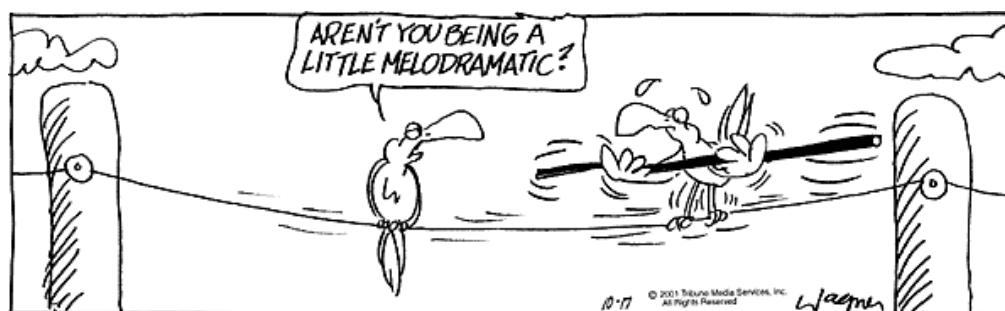
Sl. No.	Common Name	Sl. No.	Common Name
1	Little Grebe	51	Crested Treeswift
2	Little Cormorant	52	Malabar Trogon
3	Darter	53	Common Kingfisher
4	Eastern Cattle Egret	54	White-breasted Kingfisher
5	Indian Pond Heron	55	Pied Kingfisher
6	Painted Stork	56	Green Bee-eater
7	Asian Openbill	57	Indian Roller
8	Black-headed Ibis	58	Common Hoopoe
9	Indian Black Ibis	59	White-cheeked Barbet
10	Eurasian Spoonbill	60	Coppersmith Barbet
11	Indian Spot-billed Duck	61	White-bellied Woodpecker
12	Oriental Honey-buzzard	62	Streak-throated Woodpecker
13	Black-winged Kite	63	Black-rumped Flameback
14	Black Kite	64	Singing Bushlark
15	Black-eared Kite	65	Dusky Crag Martin
16	Brahminy Kite	66	Barn Swallow
17	Red-headed Vulture	67	White-browed Wagtail
18	Short-toed Snake Eagle	68	Rosy Minivet
19	Crested Serpent Eagle	69	Small Minivet
20	Indian Shikra	70	Scarlet Minivet
21	Black Eagle	71	White-spotted Fantail
22	Tawny Eagle	72	White-throated Fantail
23	Rufous-bellied Eagle	73	Red-whiskered Bulbul
24	Crested Hawk Eagle	74	White-browed Bulbul
25	Grey Francolin	75	Yellow-browed Bulbul
26	Grey Junglefowl	76	Common Iora
27	Indian Peafowl	77	Jerdon's Leafbird
28	Purple Swampphen	78	Bay-backed Shrike
29	Common Moorhen	79	Orange-headed Thrush
30	Bronze-winged Jacana	80	Common Blackbird
31	Red-wattled Lapwing	81	Black-throated Thrush
32	River Tern	82	Malabar Whistling Thrush
33	Rock Pigeon	83	Wayanad Laughingthrush (Call)
34	Laughing Dove	84	Asian Paradise-flycatcher
35	Spotted Dove	85	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher
36	Eurasian Collared Dove	86	Oriental Magpie Robin
37	Emerald Dove	87	White-rumped Shama
38	Yellow-footed Green Pigeon	88	Indian Black Robin
39	Green Imperial Pigeon	89	Pied Bushchat
40	Vernal Hanging Parrot	90	Tawny-bellied Babbler
41	Rose-ringed Parakeet	91	Large Grey Babbler
42	Plum-headed Parakeet	92	Yellow-billed Babbler
43	Southern Coucal	93	Ashy Prinia
44	Jacobin Cuckoo	94	Common Tailorbird
45	Asian Koel	95	Blyth's Reed Warbler
46	Banded Bay Cuckoo	96	Great Tit
47	Grey-bellied Cuckoo	97	Pale-billed Flowerpecker
48	Brown Fish Owl	98	Purple-rumped Sunbird
49	Spotted Owlet	99	Purple Sunbird
50	Asian Palm-swift	100	Crimson Sunbird

Sl. No.	Common Name	Sl. No.	Common Name
101	Oriental White-eye	111	Jungle Myna
102	Indian Silverbill	112	Indian Golden Oriole
103	Scaly-breasted Munia	113	Black-hooded Oriole
104	Tricoloured Munia	114	Asian Fairy Bluebird
105	House Sparrow	115	Black Drongo
106	Streaked Weaver	116	White-bellied Drongo
107	Baya Weaver	117	Greater Racket-tailed Drongo
108	Brahminy Starling	118	Rufous Treepie
109	Asian Pied Starling	119	House Crow
110	Common Myna	120	Indian Jungle Crow

* * *

Bird Humour

(contributed by JVD Moorthy)



(Animal Crackers by Fred Wagner)

Bird of the Month

Text: Umesh Mani; Photo: K Sudhir Moorti

Indian Courser (*Cursorius coromandelicus*)



Indian Courser (Rollapadu, 21-08-2016)

Order: Charadriiformes
Family: Glareolidae
Genus: *Cursorius*
Species: *C. coromandelicus*
Size: 23cm

Description & distribution: The Indian Courser is found from the Indus Valley eastwards across India to just short of Bangladesh, and southwards to the tip of peninsular India, and occasionally in the dry areas of northern Sri Lanka. It is resident in some parts of its range, but makes local movements, and prefers dry scrubby, stony or rocky country.

It is brighter-coloured than its 'cousin', the Cream-coloured Courser, and has a broader black eye-stripe beginning at the base of the beak, which in turn is topped by a white stripe whose long feathers form a separate black patch where they meet on the nape. The chestnut crown and rufous breast are clearly marked. In flight, it shows a white rump and a not-very-contrasting black wing-tip. The whitish legs have only three forward-pointing toes.

Closely related to other coursers in the region, it is considered to form a superspecies with the Cream-coloured Courser (*C. cursor*,

seen in Pakistan and north-western India), the Burchell's Courser (*C. rufus*, seen in the western parts of southern Africa) and Temminck's Courser (*C. temminckii*, seen in sub-Saharan Africa).

Habitat & behaviour: The Indian Courser is usually seen in small groups, near grass that is shorter than them. They run in short spurts, but sometimes take flight with a hoarse *gwaat* call. Its flight is quite strong, with rapid wing-beats; it flies low and runs on the ground after landing. Its diet consists mainly of insects like beetles, grasshoppers, termites and crickets, picked from the ground.

Nesting: The Indian Courser breeds mainly from March to August, and the nest is a scrape in the bare stony ground, though well-camouflaged. The usual clutch consists of 2 to 3 speckled spherical eggs. The cryptic-coloured chicks crouch and remain immobile for long periods when startled, and are extremely difficult to spot. Adults stay away from and avoid displaying when the nest is approached.

Local name: The Indian Courser is known as '*nukri*' in Hindi and Punjabi, '*yerra chitawa*' in Telugu, and '*aal kaatti*' in Tamil.

* * *

For Private Circulation Only

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Newsletter of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh
New Series Volume 13 Number 9 September 2016

FIELD OUTING: Sunday, 25th September 2016: Ananthagiri Forest. Meeting point: Punjagutta (opp. Mangatrai Pearls), 6.00AM.

Besides being a pleasant woodland walk, Ananthagiri has always been very productive from the birding viewpoint, and is a paradise for forest birds. One can see Flycatchers, White-eyes, Chloropsis, Orange-headed Thrush, Nightjars, among others. The Indian Pitta and the Brown Fish Owl have been reported earlier. This will be a half-day trip. For further details and to co-ordinate, please contact Ms Surekha Aitabathula (99490-38532).

AWC Diaries

Srikanth Bhamidipati & Ambika Pradhan



Black Buck (Photo: Umesh Mani)

The AWC is a wonderful opportunity for birders to learn about different species and habitats. This prospect of this December 2015 trip was a very exciting one, as we had planned to first explore Kurnool and Mahbubnagar districts for the AWC, and then head to a special destination for birders.....Rollapadu.

Setting out on our journey from Hyderabad, our first birding site was Devarakadra Lake. This was my first trip to this location and I was stunned. I had heard that this was a good birding site, but to my surprise there wasn't even a drop of water in that lake. This really saddened me. We saw some House Crows (*Corvus splendens*) and about 8 Painted Storks (*Mycteria leucocephala*) on top of a tree – and that was that!

Hoping for some good sightings we proceeded to our next destination, Koilsagar Dam, a few kilometers away. On the way we spotted a Common Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) hovering near

the backwaters. This was a good omen and our hopes soared. Here is what Ambika has to say about her experience of that site:

"I consider the time we reached there as a 'golden time' for birders. What we saw there was beyond beautiful. The entire water-body was bustling with activity. The clear blue water was speckled with spots of black, white and rufous brown. We were greeted by a Common Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*) that was boldly posing just about two feet from us. The little one was not the least bit bothered by the presence of humans in its surroundings. Moving ahead, we found a Small Pratincole (*Glareola lactea*) sitting between thin dry grass, staring right at us – I found it to be one of the cutest little birds I've ever seen!"

The funniest misjudgment was a friend mistaking a stone for a crocodile - which shocked almost everyone there!



Glossy Ibis (Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati)

Amazed by the area covered by the water body we decided to halt there for a bit longer than planned. Time passed quickly while observing the behaviour of birds like Common Pochards (*Aythya ferina*), Common Teal (*Anas crecca*), Indian Spot-billed Ducks (*Anas poecilorhyncha*), Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) and Cormorants. We had beautiful sightings of the Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*), Black-headed Ibis (*Threskiornis melanocephalus*), River Terns (*Sterna aurantia*), Whiskered Terns (*Chlidonias hybrida*), Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*), and Marsh Sandpiper (*Tringa stagnatilis*).



Isabelline Wheatear
(Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati)

While all the birders were busy clicking images of Pochards and other species, Lawrence uncle and I decided to walk towards the wooded area to try and spot a few more birds. We observed a lone bird sitting on top of a rock. After consultation with our *guru* we confirmed the ID of the bird as Isabelline Wheatear (*Oenanthe isabellina*). This sighting was the highlight of our day.

From here we decided to go to Makhtal Lake. On further enquiry, we were told that lake was completely dry with no bird life. Disappointed, we decided to head to our first pit stop,

Kurnool. By now everyone was hungry and we decided to stop for lunch. We spotted quite a few Short-toed Snake Eagles (*Circaetus gallicus*) en route. Finishing lunch we resumed our journey towards Kurnool, keeping a keen lookout for birds.



Green Bee-eater (Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati)

On the way, looking at the map, close to Kothakota town, we saw what looked like a huge water body. We turned on the ‘Columbus mode’ in us and started looking for this water body, which turned out to be Kanyapalli Lake, rich in vegetation with a small reservoir built around it. The location looked promising for a wide variety of birds, and we had a good survey of the location, spotting the regular birds but in good numbers. We saw Blue-tailed Bee-eaters (*Merops philippinus*), Darters (*Anhinga melanogaster*), Cormorants, a wide variety of Ducks, Kingfishers and many more. As we were birding, a lot of local kids showed interest in what we were doing, and tried to help us spot birds. We had some memorable interactions with the kids. When we were leaving, the kids sent us off with shouts of “Baahubali.... Baahubali....” targeted at one of our co-birders!

Reaching Kurnool, we parked our tired bodies at Haritha resort. By this time everyone was exhausted and eagerly waiting for some local delicacies which were arranged for by our fellow birder. After a good shower, we met for dinner. The food was spicy, leaving some of us in tears – curd was required to cool their burning tongues!

We, then, retired for the day, looking forward to the morrow.



Indian Golden Oriole (Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati)

Day 2

We began our day by splitting into two groups. One group took off to Rollapadu and the other group waited at the hotel to receive our friend Umesh, who was to join us today. On the way to Rollapadu we stopped at our first site, Gargeyapuram, which has a lake formed due to rainfall. Here we spotted some Spot-billed Ducks, Pochards, Asian Openbills (*Anastomus oscitans*), Storks and many more waterfowl. There were also a couple of raptors, like Eurasian Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*) and Short-toed Snake Eagle.

After spending an hour at the lake we proceeded towards the most awaited site – Rollapadu. En route we spotted many Egrets and regular birds. It was almost 8:00AM when we reached Nandikotkur, and we decided to stop for some breakfast before our big day.



Montagu's Harrier (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Pallid Harrier
(Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati)

We were greeted by Harriers on the way to Rollapadu and this was a good sight for all. There were many of them, flying around as well as perched on the ground; we identified the Pallid (*Circus macrourus*), Montagu's (*Circus pygargus*) and Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*). There were a few raptors which were flying high and after lots of clicks we narrowed them down to 2 species - Bonelli's Eagle (*Aquila fasciata*) and Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*).



Hen Harrier
(Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati)



Osprey (Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati)

We entered the sanctuary immediately after reaching Rollapadu and started searching for the Lesser Floricans (*Sypheotides indicus*) which were spotted earlier in the year. All the regular birds, mostly residents, were spotted in the sanctuary, and then we decided to go to the Forest Department rest house. Here we were greeted by the Bustard man of Rollapadu, Adhisheshaiah, with whom we had a very good rapport during our previous visits. He guided us to our rooms for some rest but our enthusiastic younger generation was interested in clicking some owls. They saw the Spotted Owlet (*Athene brama*) inside the rest house.



Spotted Owlet
(Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati)

Soon, our other team arrived with Umesh; I was really happy meeting him after all our previous telephonic interactions.



Grey Francolin (Photo: Umesh Mani)

We proceeded to our next destination, and another important site for AWC, Alaganur Reservoir. This is the main water source for all the agricultural land around that area, and a home to many important birds. On the way to the reservoir we saw a lot of common birds like Indian Silverbills (*Euodice malabarica*), Grey Francolin (*Francolinus pondicerianus*), Common Kestrel, Munias, Baya Weaver (*Ploceus philippinus*), etc.



Baya Weaver (female) (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Indian Silverbill on Baya Weaver nest
(Photo: Umesh Mani)

One interesting thing observed here was how the Silverbills were trying to move into the Weaver's nest.

Suddenly our eyes caught sight of a bird, sitting on top of an electric pole – it was a Red-necked Falcon (*Falco chicquera*), which was chasing off a Laughing Dove (*Stigmatopelia senegalensis*). When we got close to the reservoir, we spotted something which at first looked like a big eagle as it just zoomed past the car. The first instinct is often correct – as it was this time. The bird was a Greater Spotted Eagle (*Aquila clanga*) which perched on a tree close to the canal which passes through the reservoir.



Red-necked Falcon (Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati)

As soon as we entered the reservoir the first sighting was a Greater Painted-snipe (*Rostratula benghalensis*) which was stationary for a few moments and then flew away, seeing the company. There were all the regular species along with a few Gulls, Terns, Herons and Ducks.

We decided to move from that view point and check another one closer to the water. We drove around the rocks which surrounded the lake and got close to the water body. Here we saw a few Painted Storks, Kingfishers, Openbills, Pelicans and Flamingos. After spending some time at the lake we decided to go for lunch and headed towards a hotel in Nandikotkur and then headed back to the rest house for a bit of relaxation.



Yellow Wagtail (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Southern Grey Shrike (Photo: Umesh Mani)

At 4:00PM, we went for another round of birding and this time we decided to explore the sanctuary again. Umesh was excited to see the Florican and the Southern Grey Shrike (*Lanius meridionalis*). We also spotted a few Rosy Starlings (*Pastor roseus*) and other common birds along with herds of Blackbucks. With no rare sightings we decided to go toward the reservoir to check for other species, but didn't find anything new. After spending time here till late evening we called it a day and headed back to the rest house. Exhausted from the day's birding activity, we still completed one of the most important tasks of the day – the bird list. It's always a great exercise to sit in the group and prepare the list, as interesting conversations come up during the task and helps in increasing our knowledge. Once done, we retired to bed dreaming about the next day's sightings, especially the Great Indian Bustard.



Red-naped Ibis (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Day3

Next morning I guided the others to that part of the sanctuary where I had spotted the GIB earlier that year. Lawrence uncle took on the task of searching for the GIB, but ended up finding a male Florican! After observing the bird everyone was happy. I spotted a female with 2 chicks. Everyone was joyful to see this happy family.

We continued our journey and came across more Ospreys, Harriers, Eagles and Kestrels. There was one Kestrel which looked quite different from our regular species, and once we

reviewed all images from our shutterbugs we confirmed the species to be the Lesser Kestrel (*Falco naumanni*) – an important sighting.



Lesser Kestrel (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Happy about sighting some important species we decided to head towards the reservoir. En route, we stopped near the fields and saw a lot of activity of smaller birds like Buntings, about 200 Grey Wagtails, Stonechats, Pipits, Larks and many other common birds. At the reservoir we did not find anything new.



Common Hawk Cuckoo
(Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati)

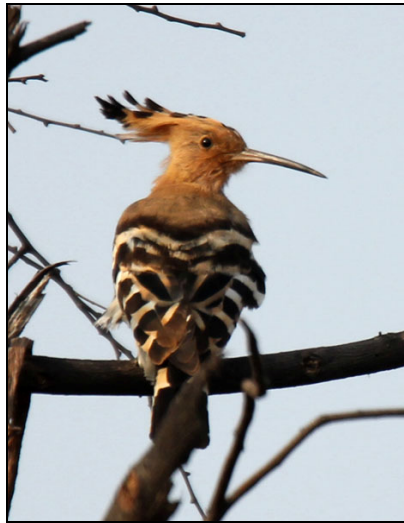
It was around 1:00PM, and we decided to head back to the rest house for lunch. Here our friends clicked images of Parakeets, Owlet and Common Hawk Cuckoo (*Hierococcyx varius*).

One of our vehicles had been troubling us since morning, not starting – so, while we waited for a mechanic to arrive, we decided to do what we knew best – birding. Once the mechanic arrived, we headed towards Kurnool city where the service center was located. Leaving the vehicle there, we headed back to Hyderabad in one car – it was a tight fit with 6 people in a small Wagon R! But one topic kept our energy levels at an all time high – that was BIRDING!

Some more photos taken during the trip:



Chestnut-shouldered Petronia



Common Hoopoe



Brahminy Starling



Greater Coucal



White-headed Ibis



White-eyed Buzzard



Eurasian Collared Dove



Common Stonechat (male)
(Photos: Umesh Mani)



Common Stonechat (female)



Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse (female)



Oriental Honey Buzzard



Scaly-breasted Munia



Blyth's Reed Warbler

(Photos: Umesh Mani)

Listed below are the birds spotted during our trip:

1	Ruddy Shelduck	15	White-throated Kingfisher	29	Scaly-breasted Munia
2	Cotton Pygmy-Goose	16	Pied Kingfisher	30	Lesser Whistling-duck
3	Northern Pintail	17	Green Bee-eater	31	Bar-headed Goose
4	Garganey	18	Indian Roller	32	Indian Spot-billed Duck
5	Green-winged Teal	19	Coppersmith Barbet	33	Jungle Bush Quail
6	Common Pochard	20	Eurasian Kestrel	34	Greater Flamingo
7	Indian Peafowl	21	Rose-ringed Parakeet	35	Asian Openbill
8	Gray Francolin	22	Plum-headed Parakeet	36	Woolly-necked Stork
9	Little Grebe	23	Common Iora	37	Painted Stork
10	Little Cormorant	24	Small Minivet	38	Great Cormorant
11	Great Cormorant	25	Bay-backed Shrike	39	Oriental Darter
12	Grey Heron	26	Long-tailed Shrike	40	Spot-billed Pelican
13	Purple Heron	27	Indian Golden Oriole	41	Black-crowned Night Heron
14	Great Egret	28	Black Drongo	42	Eurasian Spoonbill

43	Little Egret	86	White-bellied Drongo	129	Osprey
44	Cattle Egret	87	Rufous Treepie	130	Greater Spotted Eagle
45	Indian Pond Heron	88	House Crow	131	Bonelli's Eagle
46	Glossy Ibis	89	Large-billed Crow	132	White-eyed Buzzard
47	Black-headed Ibis	90	Ashy-crowned Sparrowlark	133	Eurasian Marsh Harrier
48	Red-naped Ibis	91	Indian Bushlark	134	Northern Harrier
49	Black-shouldered Kite	92	Barn Swallow	135	Pallid Harrier
50	Oriental Honey Buzzard	93	Wire-tailed Swallow	136	Montagu's Harrier
51	Short-toed Snake Eagle	94	Red-vented Bulbul	137	Shikra
52	Crested Hawk Eagle	95	Zitting Cisticola	138	Brahminy Kite
53	Black Kite	96	Common Tailorbird	139	Lesser Florican
54	Black-eared Kite	97	Ashy Prinia	140	White-breasted Waterhen
55	Eurasian Coot	98	Plain Prinia	141	Gray-headed Swampphen
56	Black-winged Stilt	99	Large Gray Babbler	142	Yellow-wattled Lapwing
57	Red-wattled Lapwing	100	Yellow-billed Babbler	143	Greater Painted-snipe
58	Kentish Plover	101	Indian Robin	144	Little Stint
59	Little Ringed Plover	102	Oriental Magpie Robin	145	Common Snipe
60	Common Sandpiper	103	Siberian Stonechat	146	Green Sandpiper
61	Common Greenshank	104	Pied Bushchat	147	Common Greenshank
62	Marsh Sandpiper	105	Isabelline Wheatear	148	Barred Buttonquail
63	Wood Sandpiper	106	Rosy Starling	149	Black-headed Gull
64	Common Redshank	107	Asian Pied Starling	150	Brown-headed Gull
65	Small Pratincole	108	Brahminy Starling	151	Black-bellied Tern
66	Whiskered Tern	109	Chestnut-tailed Starling	152	River Tern
67	River Tern	110	Common Myna	153	Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse
68	Rock Pigeon	111	Jerdon's Leafbird	154	Red Collared Dove
69	Eurasian Collared Dove	112	Pale-billed Flowerpecker	155	Spotted Owlet
70	Spotted Dove	113	Purple-rumped Sunbird	156	Indian Nightjar
71	Laughing Dove	114	Western Yellow Wagtail	157	Indian Grey Hornbill
72	Greater Coucal	115	Grey Wagtail	158	Blue-tailed Bee-eater
73	Blue-faced Malkoha	116	White Wagtail	159	Lesser Kestrel
74	Asian Koel	117	White-browed Wagtail	160	Red-necked Falcon
75	Common Hawk Cuckoo	118	Paddyfield Pipit	161	Common Woodshrike
76	Asian Palm Swift	119	House Sparrow	162	Ashy Woodswallow
77	Eurasian Hoopoe	120	Chestnut-shouldered Petronia	163	Black-headed Cuckooshrike
78	Common Kingfisher	121	Indian Silverbill	164	Southern Grey Shrike
79	Ashy Drongo	122	White-browed Bulbul	165	Tawny Pipit
80	Spot-breasted Fantail	123	Rufous-fronted Prinia	166	Red-headed Bunting
81	Rufous-tailed Lark	124	Jungle Prinia	167	Common Rosefinch
82	Oriental Skylark	125	Oriental White-eye	168	Baya Weaver
83	Tawny Lark	126	Common Babbler	169	Red Avadavat
84	Dusky Crag	127	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher	170	Tricolored Munia
85	Red-rumped Swallow	128	Purple Sunbird		

Ethical Birding – The Only Way

K Sudhir Moorti

I am happy that birding has become an increasingly popular hobby amongst the urban population in India of late. I would like to shed some light on the proper and ethical way of birding, for the benefit of people who are new to this wonderful hobby – especially the younger lot, in whose hands the future of birding rests.

What is birding? I feel birding is more than just sighting birds – it involves observing, studying and recording all about birds – their physical attributes, habitat, behaviour, breeding and, in some cases, migration. Unlike popular misconception Birding is not just sighting birds and identifying them with the help of field guides, the Internet, and senior birders. That is just a part of it.

In the first place what makes you a birder?

I have many times asked other birders what is their favourite species; it's usually a species that is not sighted frequently. It is quite natural to attach more value to things less available. Therefore we have 'common' and 'rare' birds. I would be lying if I said that sighting a rare bird does not excite me. Of course it does! But while in search of these 'rare' species, the more common ones also do bring a smile to my face. The antics of a Drongo, the restlessness of an Ashy Prinia or the noisy hopping around of a bunch of gregarious Babblers – that for me is the pure joy of birding. Sighting a rare bird, or a bird not usually found in the region, makes one 'famous' and surely there is great satisfaction attached to such a feat. However, a word of caution here – do not seek such glory; bird in an ethical way and glory shall definitely come to you. I have personally gone through all these phases and I am sure I made a lot of the mistakes which I am cautioning you against. Over the years, I have learnt that the key is to just enjoy watching birds – the emotions are very important.

I once chanced upon a group of birders, who went about adding species to their list in a flurry of activity, some of them hardly looking at the bird! While the group leader shouted out the common names of the birds, the rest blindly accepted and moved on. In such activity, the checklist becomes a scorecard and birding becomes a race. Some may feel that there is nothing wrong with that – but there are a few do's and don'ts, which we tend to ignore in our overzealous effort to be the top scorer. I shall endeavour to enlist a few hazards here.

The Habitat:

As you may already be aware, different kinds of habitats are home to different species of birds. While on a field trip, please remember the following:

- The habitat is home to many species of flora and fauna. Every single species is important to the eco-system of that place. So try not to disturb the status quo.

- Do not litter! Anything that is not organic is potentially harmful to the habitat. Plastic is a major threat. So don't throw any such things carelessly.
- Do not hack your way into the woods to create a new path. Try to stay on existing paths and trails most of the time.

The Welfare of our Avian Friends

As birders, I am sure everyone would agree that we are their friends and well-wishers. We all love birds, hence the passion towards this great hobby. So here are a few tips to ensure their welfare:

- Avoid disturbing birds or other species present; do not make loud noises or shout. Remember we are guests in their land.
- Try not to get too close to them in your effort to get a better shot.
- Definitely do not throw stones at them to make them fly (don't be horrified – I've seen some photographers do it in their quest for "action shots"!)
- Do not try to flush the birds. E.g. don't send a partner to the other side to draw the bird out of the bush.
- Do not crowd the area; try to be as subtle as possible. E.g. one member of the group shouts out a sighting, and the others start running at breakneck speed for a shot.
- Do not drive deep into the habitat with your vehicle.
- Do not use flash/artificial light while photographing in low light.
- Form small groups of not more than 4 or 5 people while going birding.
- Do not play the call/song to attract the bird – it is highly hazardous. E.g. a female may abandon a potential partner, on listening to the fake breeding call. This is interference and totally unethical

Identification

A very interesting topic, and sometimes also the most controversial. Identifying and recording a bird on a field trip is the essence of birding. It is also a very important part of the data recorded globally to ascertain various aspects of the existence of a particular species. Therefore, it is advisable to be prudent and slightly conservative when identifying birds. Birders follow the good old 'honour system', i.e. your word is taken at face value – so the only person you are answerable to when identifying and recording birds is yourself. Hence, it is all the more important to be careful about what one reports.

- Understand the different parts of a bird's anatomy before you get on the field, so that you are able to put down in words what you have seen.
- Carry a reliable local field guide.
- Before your field trip, try to do some research on the birds found in the area, and their habits.
- If you get a photograph of the bird, well and good; if not, try to remember distinct features of the bird and note them down so you can refer and identify it later.
- Earlier, birders used to sketch the bird and mark the features observed by them; I, however, am not averse to using technology. A photograph is a good way to record, probably the best in today's conditions; either way, be sure of what you have seen.
- If you could not get a photograph, be extremely cautious in recording. Consult experts. If still not sure, just let it go. You can always go back to that place, or see the same bird elsewhere; after all luck is also vital in birding.
- Do not record a species on speculation or conjecture. Only record what has been positively identified. Many times we may go looking for a particular species in that area, which would be a 'lifer' for us – this can make us fall prey to wishful thinking, with every bird looking like the target 'lifer'.
- Check for all factors before confirming the sighting – visible distinctive features; habitat; whether it's a ground bird, bush bird or arboreal; and so on.
- Calls can be very useful in identification, but they are tricky. Lots of birds have similar calls; some have several different calls; some even imitate the calls of other birds. So tread carefully.

When you are new to birding, you usually depend on seniors in the group for identification help. Here's what you can do:

Gently question the basis for identification; this will help you learn to identify on your own, and also understand the strength of your senior's conviction.

Understand how your senior or group leader regards identification. Is he a dedicated and passionate birder, who can say "I am sorry, I don't know" when at a loss? Or does he treat it casually, and just toss out names of species even when he is unsure? Go back and do some research. This is an important part of the learning.

Some group leaders take it upon themselves to make their group the 'best' in the region. In the quest to increase their species

counts, the authenticity of their sighting and reporting is put at risk. Use your own judgement in deciding what to record or what not to.

Birds in Breeding

Birds breed seasonally, and many have interesting breeding rituals, plumages, calls etc. It is great to see and photograph the same, but keep in mind that it is a very important activity for the birds, and the propagation of the entire species may depend on this. Hence, I advise extra caution at such times.

According to a report by Joanna Burger and Michael Gochfeld titled **"Human Distance and Birds: Tolerance and Response Distances of Resident and Migrant Species in India"**, the distance at which a bird could feel disturbed depends on a lot of factors, including the bird's migratory status, the number of people approaching, the time of day, and the bird's total body-length (including tail). This distance is called the flushing distance, and varies among different species of birds.

So the safest approach would be to stay as far away as possible, or get as close as possible without disturbing the bird. The number of people approaching is also an important factor. Bird in smaller groups and maintain a decent distance. Look for signs when the birds become alert; stop right there and don't go any closer.

Nesting

Many times while birding, we come across nests of birds. Nesting is a very interesting and complicated process in birds, and absolutely critical to their survival. Nesting habits differ from species to species. While the male Baya Weaver tries to impress the female with an intricately woven nest, a Hornbill seals off its nest to protect the female and chicks. There is a lot we can learn from nesting habits of birds. Disturbing a nest or birds during nesting is criminal – the bird may move the nest to a less safe and predator-prone area due to your interference; it may also lead to loss of eggs, chicks or even abandonment of the nest. I strongly advise to exercise extreme caution while observing nesting birds. Maintain a safe distance and do not disturb them.

Reporting

It is we birders who provide data to scientists across the world on a daily basis. The wealth of information we provide is invaluable to their research and studies. It also goes a long way in the conservation of birds. Wrong data, therefore, could also lead to ill-planned or wrongly-directed conservation efforts, and a waste of precious resources.

- Reach out to eminent birders and seniors and take their opinion.
- Report all rare sightings to proper authorities with adequate evidence and confirmation of the sighting.

Here's to sensible and ethical birding!

* * *

Bird of the Month

Text: Umesh Mani; Photo: Bhamidipati Srikanth

Jungle Myna (*Acridotheres fuscus*)



Jungle Myna (Ooty, 03-09-2016)

Order: Passeriformes
Family: Sturnidae
Genus: *Acridotheres*
Species: *A. fuscus*
Size: 20-23 cm

Description & distribution: The Jungle Myna, a fierce-looking member of the Starling family, is a resident breeder across its range covering Pakistan, Nepal, India, Bangladesh and Myanmar, east to Indonesia. It is a typical myna, but has dark grey plumage (as against the browner plumage of the Common Myna) and darker on the head and wings. The prominent forehead tuft and bright yellow bill and legs are distinctive. It has a white tail tip and large white wing patches which are very clear in flight. There is no bare patch around the eye. The irises are blue in the southern Indian race, whereas they are yellow in other

birds of the species. Sexes are similar, but juvenile birds are browner.

Habitat & behaviour: The Jungle Myna is usually seen in forests or near cultivation (like paddy fields), close to water. It is omnivorous and an opportunistic feeder, and its diet includes grains, fruits, insects and flower nectar.

Nesting: The Jungle Myna nests in holes, usually in trees, but has been known to nest inside pipes, and in vents or crevices in buildings. The usual clutch consists of 3 to 6 eggs.

Local name: The Jungle Myna is known as 'pahari myna' or 'jungli myna' in Hindi, 'adavigorina' in Telugu, and 'kaattu myna' in Tamil.

* * *

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Newsletter of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh
New Series Volume 13 Number 10 October 2016

FIELD OUTING: Sunday, 23rd October 2016: Sanjeevaiah Park. Meeting point: Main gate, 6.00AM.

Spread out over 90 acres, this park, abutting the Hussain Sagar Lake in the heart of the city, is a great spot for birding. Being the start of the migration season, we can expect to see several of the migrant species, in addition to the usual resident species. The shady trees offer refuge to quite a few birds, and the Park has, in the past, yielded sightings of Orioles, Sunbirds, Drongos, Asian Pied Starlings, etc. Leafbirds have been seen occasionally, as also Coppermith Barbets. The lakeshore should offer some waders and it may be possible to glimpse some Terns and Gulls. This will be a half-day trip. Carry snacks and water as usual. For further details and to co-ordinate, please contact Ms Surekha Aitabathula (99490-38532).

INDOOR MEETING: TALES FROM THE NEST: Story-telling by Deepa Kiran

Wednesday, 25th October 2016, 6.15PM: Hamburg Hall, Goethe-zentrum Hyderabad, 20 Journalist's Colony, Road No. 3, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad – 500 034. (For directions, please contact 94905-09251 or 040-65526443/23350040)

If you love stories or birds, this promises to be an enchanting evening of stories about birds and birds watching, as storyteller Deepa Kiran takes us through an engaging story time of delight and discoveries. Deepa Kiran is a storyteller, educationalist, writer and founder of Story Arts India. She has been telling stories for very many years now, starting in a small town in Maharashtra to now regaling audience across the world. She weaves in music, dance, fun, love and laughter into her story time. She trains teachers from the central government, state and private institutions on the art of storytelling and how to use it in a learning environment.

Ameenpur birding trip

Text and illustrations: I K Sanjeevani (age 7)



Hello, I am Sanjeevani. I enjoyed the trip by seeing some birds called White-throated Kingfisher, Cotton Pygmy-goose, Ashy Prinia, Tailorbird, Flowerpecker, Coot, Painted Stork etc. Thank you for teaching me what is Swallow and Swift. I wanted to see Pied Kingfisher but I couldn't. I enjoyed the trip very much and I

liked Pheasant-tailed Jacana very much. Chitra aunty told it is a lotus walker. I heard the sound of Red-wattled Lapwing, it sounds like 'Did you do it?' I am really waiting for the next trip. Thank you.



* * *

Trip Report – Tadoba WLS Text and Photos: Srikanth Bhamidipati



Bengal Tiger

My love for the wild was triggered when, as a kid, I saw my first tiger, walking majestically and then vanishing into the woods. Many years passed with frequent visits to different forests in the country with the sole purpose of spotting this majestic mammal

and in the bargain learning about other beings. In recent times, this craze for people wanting to spot a big cat in the wild has increased so much that they don't respect the basic fact – "live and let live - IN PEACE".

We (Lawrence, Amritha, Hemant, Nupur, Ravi, Jayati and I) had planned a visit to Tadoba Andheri Tiger Reserve (TATR) in June 2016. TATR, once a national park converted into a tiger reserve, gave a massive boost to the tourism in that region. The terrain varies from old teak trees to open Savannah-like grasslands and gives scope for many other species as well. The weather during our travel was a little unpredictable. We had planned for a 4-day trip and initial logistics arrangements were underway. The sightings during that time period looked very promising and we hoped for some lovely sights of birds and mammals.

Upon reaching Chandrapur railway station, we hopped onto our pre-booked taxi to the resort where we had booked our accommodation. Excitement levels were high considering the activities we were undertaking in the next few days. On our way towards TATR we crossed small villages and also a huge quarry a few kilometers away from the forest entrance. This put me off as I thought that might affect the sanctity and peace of the forest, but considering the distance to the forest entrance, I was relieved.



Asian Paradise-flycatcher

On our way towards the forest we spotted quite a few birds which are commonly found everywhere, including an Asian Paradise-flycatcher (*Terpsiphone paradisi*).

Upon reaching the forest entry gate, our driver had to make an entry and during this time we got our gear ready, hoping for some sightings along the way. Driving through the forest area listening to the calls of the Banded Bay Cuckoo was an amazing feeling. On reaching the resort we checked into our tents and immediately got into action as we planned for a busy day ahead. After getting ready and having a good breakfast, we decided to go for a walk into the surrounding areas of the resort.

While walking into the area we first encountered the Asian Paradise-flycatcher which was flying in the bushes, trying to dodge the shutter bugs. We also saw the Tawny-bellied Babbler (*Dumetia hyperythra*), Common Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*) and a few Minivets.



Tawny-bellied Babbler

We walked into the clearance area of the buffer zone and while we all were busily trying to locate a species, our master photographer Hemant captured the image of a bird which was hiding in the bushes – Indian Thick-knee (*Burhinus indicus*). After the small stroll, we headed back to the resort for lunch and then geared up for our first drive into the core area.

The drive into the core area was in a modified Gypsy and we were happy with the open vehicle, for we were sure we wouldn't miss anything. As we entered the core area there was a sea of vehicles in front of us and they were excited at seeing the Panderpauni tigress. We were amongst the last few to enter the forest. Our aim was spotting birds and this was clearly explained to our guide and the driver.



Indian Pitta

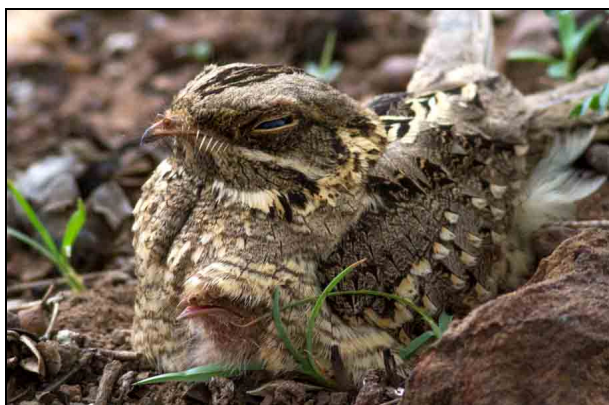
From the main road we drove onto a smaller road where calls of the Spotted Owlet (*Athene brama*) and Indian Pitta (*Pitta brachyura*) caught our attention. The sightings were a bit difficult and we saw some Flowerpeckers and Sunbirds flying on top of the tall tree line. Just as the open forest welcomed us, we had our first important sighting of the day - Sirkeer Malkoha (*Taccocua leschenaultii*). Our guide was hell-bent on tracking a tiger for us, but with no luck that day.

The Indian Pitta, which is a rather shy bird and not seen often even during its season, was the highlight of the trip for us – we saw nothing less than 17 during this trip! As we finished our day, we returned to our resort with some good sightings – about 89 species of birds, Sambar, a few Langur, Gaur and Spotted Deer. One interesting observation was the large proportion of Greater Racket-tailed Drongos (*Dicrurus paradiseus*) with single elongated tail-streamers – nearly 6-7 out of the 10-odd birds that we saw.



Oriental Honey-buzzard

Next morning we went early to the core area and hoped for some good sightings, but there were the same species we had seen on the first day. During our drive, one thing which grabbed my attention were the camera traps set to observe the animals. It was disappointing that technology was being used only to track the movement of these wonderful beings and not for the love and protection of animals. I will explain this a little later. We continued our journey and added about 30 more birds which included an Indian Nightjar (*Caprimulgus asiaticus*) sitting astride its baby. We then headed back to our resort where a nice lunch awaited us.



Indian Nightjar

We had booked for another visit to the forest and this time we visited the buffer zone of the forest. We spotted the Woolly-necked Stork (*Ciconia episcopus*), a few Quails, Owls, Bitterns and other ducks. In the meantime our driver got to know of a tigress sitting in the bushes nearby. When we reached that place there were about 6 more jeeps eagerly waiting for it to come out into the open. After a long wait the Tigress, Madhuri, stood up and glanced at the hungry souls trying to capture the moment in their cameras. She then went back to resting with her 2 cubs that

were pretty hard to spot. We also spotted a frightened hare that was trying to save itself from being run over by the vehicles.

As all this was happening, I realized that family never forgets you!! There was a family of Gaur who were looking in the direction of the tigress. The previous evening a calf had been attacked by the tigress and she had hidden it in the bush. The way the Gaurs were looking at that spot was heartbreaking and this is when I understood the circle of life.



Brahminy Starling

Next morning we had the chance to visit the buffer zone again. The sightings weren't too many – it was quite a quiet morning – but the forest was amazing with fresh air coming in from all directions. While driving around aimlessly, we spotted a few raptors, a Black Bittern (*Dupetor flavicollis*) and 2 Mottled Wood Owls (*Strix ocellata*) which were being harassed by a Brahminy Starling (*Sturnia pagodarum*). We returned to our guest house with not much of luck in the morning session.



Lesser Adjutant

In the evening we drove into the forest hoping for some good sightings. We drove to a water hole, our eyes fixed on one particular bird that turned out to be the most important sighting of the trip – the Lesser Adjutant (*Leptoptilos javanicus*). Just as we headed to another location, our driver got information of a tiger sitting in a water hole in the open. The soul of Michael Schumacher seemed to have possessed him, as he drove very fast to get to that location.



The crowd of vehicles

The male tiger, Pandu, was having a good time resting by the water hole and he was least bothered about the people around. Scores of people had gathered there. We decided to leave the location and move forward as most of the people seemed to have no regard for nature, and it's saddening that a responsible department is not doing anything about it as its primary motto seems to be to increase tourism.

With these thoughts, we returned to the guest house hoping that the next day would be better. On the way, we spotted the highly trained and organized hunters – the wild dogs or Dhole. There were about 5 of them and seemed to be in search of food.



Dhole

Next morning we again headed back into the core area. *En route*, we saw Spotted Owlets and a Mottled Wood Owl right above our heads in the open. There wasn't enough sunlight to capture a good image but the mere sighting was sufficient. As soon as we entered, the Indian Pitta, Asian Paradise-flycatcher and a female Indian Golden Oriole (*Oriolus kundoo*) gave us a warm welcome and some good poses.

A few meters away there was a Crested Hawk Eagle (*Nisaetus cirrhatus*) which was sitting on the road and taking a dip. It gave us a good 20 minutes of time during which we all clicked some 300-400 images each. Then we proceeded into the forest to a water hole and found Barking Deer and some Munias.



Crested Hawk Eagle



Barking Deer

As we were headed back towards the gate, we spotted a Crested Serpent Eagle (*Spilornis cheela*) sitting at eye level, and to our surprise a Paradise-flycatcher was attacking it! We later realized that there was a nest with its chick and parents always are protective.



Crested Serpent Eagle

That was practically the last sighting of the trip, and we had gathered some awesome memories to carry back.

Some more photos taken during the trip:



Asian Pied Starling



Chestnut-shouldered Petronia



Indian Roller



Jungle Owlet



Rose-ringed Parakeet



Small Minivet (female)



White-eyed Buzzard



Yellow-crowned Woodpecker



Brown Fish Owl



Common Woodshrike



Grey-breasted Prinia



Oriental Magpie Robin

Listed below are the birds spotted during our trip:

Sl. No.	Common Name	Sl. No.	Common Name	Sl. No.	Common Name
1	Intermediate Egret	9	Asian Openbill	17	Cotton Pygmy-goose
2	Grey Heron	10	Woolly-necked Stork	18	Spot-billed Duck
3	Purple Heron	11	Lesser Adjutant	19	Oriental Honey-buzzard
4	Eastern Cattle Egret	12	Glossy Ibis	20	Black-winged Kite
5	Indian Pond Heron	13	Black-headed Ibis	21	Short-toed Snake Eagle
6	Chestnut Bittern	14	Red-naped Ibis	22	Crested Serpent Eagle
7	Black Bittern	15	Lesser Whistling-duck	23	Shikra
8	Painted Stork	16	Comb Duck	24	White-eyed Buzzard

Sl. No.	Common Name	Sl. No.	Common Name	Sl. No.	Common Name
25	Crested Hawk Eagle	63	Jungle Owlet	101	Bay-backed Shrike
26	Painted Francolin	64	Spotted Owlet	102	Long-tailed Shrike
27	Grey Francolin	65	Indian Nightjar	103	Orange-headed Thrush
28	Jungle Bush Quail	66	Savanna Nightjar	104	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher
29	Painted Spurfowl	67	Asian Palm Swift	105	Indian Robin
30	Grey Junglefowl	68	Crested Treeswift	106	Oriental Magpie Robin
31	Indian Peafowl	69	Common Kingfisher	107	Pied Bushchat
32	White-breasted Waterhen	70	White-breasted Kingfisher	108	Tawny-bellied Babbler
33	Purple Swampphen	71	Pied Kingfisher	109	Large Grey Babbler
34	Common Moorhen	72	Green Bee-eater	110	Yellow-billed Babbler
35	Pheasant-tailed Jacana	73	Indian Roller	111	Zitting Cisticola
36	Bronze-winged Jacana	74	Common Hoopoe	112	Grey-breasted Prinia
37	Yellow-wattled Lapwing	75	Indian Grey Hornbill	113	Ashy Prinia
38	Red-wattled Lapwing	76	Brown-headed Barbet	114	Plain Prinia
39	Black-winged Stilt	77	Coppersmith Barbet	115	Common Tailorbird
40	Indian Thick-knee	78	Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker	116	Great Tit
41	Oriental Pratincole	79	Yellow-crowned Woodpecker	117	Purple-rumped Sunbird
42	River Tern	80	Black-rumped Flameback	118	Purple Sunbird
43	Painted Sandgrouse	81	Greater Flameback	119	Oriental White-eye
44	Blue Rock Pigeon	82	Indian Pitta	120	Indian Silverbill
45	Laughing Dove	83	Singing Bushlark	121	White-rumped Munia
46	Spotted Dove	84	Indian Bushlark	122	Scaly-breasted Munia
47	Eurasian Collared Dove	85	Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark	123	House Sparrow
48	Yellow-footed Green Pigeon	86	Rufous-tailed Lark	124	Chestnut-shouldered Petronia
49	Green Imperial Pigeon	87	Sykes's Lark	125	Baya Weaver
50	Alexandrine Parakeet	88	Dusky Crag Martin	126	Brahminy Starling
51	Rose-ringed Parakeet	89	Barn Swallow	127	Chestnut-tailed Starling
52	Plum-headed Parakeet	90	Wire-tailed Swallow	128	Asian Pied Starling
53	Southern Coucal	91	Red-rumped Swallow	129	Common Myna
54	Sirkeer Malkoha	92	Streak-throated Swallow	130	Jungle Myna
55	Jacobin Cuckoo	93	Large Cuckooshrike	131	Indian Golden Oriole
56	Asian Koel	94	Small Minivet	132	Black-hooded Oriole
57	Banded Bay Cuckoo	95	Common Woodshrike	133	Black Drongo
58	Grey-bellied Cuckoo	96	Asian Paradise-flycatcher	134	White-bellied Drongo
59	Common Hawk Cuckoo	97	Black-naped Monarch	135	Greater Racket-tailed Drongo
60	Indian Cuckoo	98	White-spotted Fantail	136	Rufous Treepie
61	Brown Fish Owl	99	Red-vented Bulbul	137	House Crow
62	Mottled Wood Owl	100	Common Iora	138	Indian Jungle Crow

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Bird of the Month

Text and photo: Umesh Mani

Himalayan Bulbul (*Pycnonotus leucogenys*)



Himalayan Bulbul (Chopta, 09-10-2016)

Order: Passeriformes
Family: Pycnonotidae
Genus: *Pycnonotus*
Species: *P. leucogenys*
Size: 18-20 cm

Description & distribution: The Himalayan Bulbul, a very attractive-looking member of the Pycnonotidae family, is a resident breeder across its range from Iraq and southern Iran east across the Arabian Peninsula to Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, north-western India, Nepal and Bhutan. It has the distinction of being the national bird of Bahrain. Clear white cheeks, with a black crescent at the rear, and a prominent forward-pointing crest differentiate it from the somewhat similar-looking White-eared Bulbul; the crest may not be as prominent in the birds found on the plains within its range. The head, face and throat are black, and the long brownish-grey tail has a terminal whitish patch. The upperparts are also brownish-grey, and underparts are pale grey-buff to grey-white, with a rich yellow vent. The irises are reddish-brown, with a narrow yellow eye ring, and the bill and legs are black. Sexes are similar; juvenile birds show a duller brown head.

Habitat & behaviour: The Himalayan Bulbul is usually seen in pairs or small flocks, in dry alpine forests and shrub, wooded valleys and bushy hillsides, as well as sub-Himalayan plains, including bushes around towns and villages. A bird of open country, it prefers bushes rather than trees. It is generally seen up to an elevation of around 2400 metres, although it may venture higher if fruiting trees are present. It also frequents cities, parks and gardens near human habitat, especially where food scraps are left, since that attracts the flies and other insects that form part of its diet. It tends to hunt from a perch, hawking insects in the air or on the ground. Besides, it also feeds on fruits, berries, seeds, buds and nectar.

Nesting: The Himalayan Bulbul nests in low bushes or branches of low trees, generally between 0.5-3m above the ground. The nest is a cup made of grass, twigs, stems, leaves and roots, and lined with finer rootlets, lichen and grass. The nest is built by the female. The usual clutch consists of 2 to 5 eggs, incubated mainly by the female, but the young are fed by both parents.

Local name: The Himalayan Bulbul is known as 'safed kaan bulbul' in Hindi, 'shwet-karna bulbul' in Sanskrit, and 'pahari bulbul' in Punjabi and Bengali.

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Newsletter of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh
New Series Volume 13 Number 11 November 2016

FIELD OUTING: Wednesday, 23rd November 2016: Hyderabad Golf Club. Meeting point: Punjagutta Cross-roads, 6.00AM.

The vast and beautiful grounds of the Golf Club promise to be an interesting venue for birding. Since a large part of the 18-hole golf course is within the premises of the Golconda Fort, it is likely that we would see a good variety of birds. This will be a half-day trip. Carry snacks and water as usual. For further details and to co-ordinate, please contact Ms Surekha Aitabathula (99490-38532).

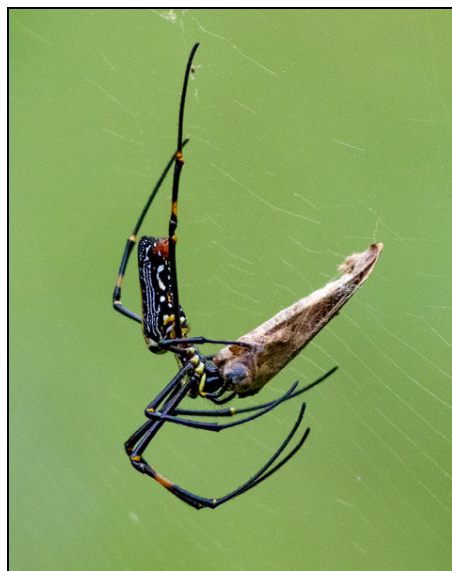
INDOOR MEETING: CONNECTING ONESELF WITH WATER BODIES IN ONE'S VICINITY: Talk by Dr Lubna Sarwat

Wednesday, 16th November 2016, 6.00PM: Hamburg Hall, Goethe-zentrum Hyderabad, 20 Journalist's Colony, Road No. 3, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad – 500 034. (For directions, please contact 94905-09251 or 040-65526443/23350040)

Dr. Lubna Sarwat, Co-Convenor, SOUL (Save Our Urban Lakes) Society, is a prominent social worker and has been actively championing the cause of saving our lakes with the authorities. Our State was well known for its hundreds of lakes, but they are steadily being encroached upon or being polluted by industrial waste. This adversely affects not just us but also the flora and fauna of the region. As Dr. Lubna says, "Lakes are like eyes of the Earth - Let us preserve them as we do our eyelids." Dr Sarwat will share her insights on the issue and how to address it.

Trip Report – Ananthagiri Hills, Sep 2016

Text: Dr Jayati Mitra; Photos: Srikanth Bhamidipati



Golden Orb-web Spider

When our birding trip to the Ananthagiri Hills was announced, it was almost the end of September. The retreating monsoon, overactive with its torrential rains, had left many city streets inundated. The drab grey dawn kept many people indoors but for a few of us this seemed to be the best opportunity to observe nature. As we drove along, the trees along our path, with their

dense canopy of lush green leaves, looked strikingly beautiful against the backdrop of an overcast sky interspersed with blue-grey clouds. A light drizzle continued, restricting our *en route* sightings to a few Spotted Doves (*Stigmatopelia chinensis*) and White-throated Kingfishers (*Halcyon smyrnensis*).

A piping hot breakfast with tea energized us, but it was disappointing not to find birds near the Hanuman temple owing to the non-stop drizzle, and the dense undergrowth which blocked our way on familiar trails leading into the forest.

The weather, however, gradually improved by the time we reached the Padmanava temple gate. This is not the season to expect migrants but the tiny Asian Brown Flycatcher (*Muscicapa dauurica*) was sighted immediately. More birds were seen as we proceeded down towards the banyan tree. An Indian Grey Hornbill (*Ocyrceros birostris*) flew across our path. The partially-hidden Coppersmith Barbet (*Megalaima haemacephala*) was feeding on the topmost branch of a tree. Tawny-bellied Babbler (*Dumetia hyperythra*) hopped around on the bushes and, when two of them flew up and perched on the overhead cable, we could observe their bright orange-brown underbellies.

After panning for a while, the colourful Lesser Goldenback (*Dinopium benghalense*) was spotted holding on to the main trunk and circling it while pecking for insects. Myriad calls pervaded the atmosphere but one whistle seemed to be a clear and distinct sound like *peew-peew-piu*. The approaching birds were a pair of Jacobin Cuckoos (*Clamator jacobinus*), said to be the harbinger of the monsoon season. The slim black-and-white birds with crests and long tails were looking very graceful in flight. They sat for a while in the tree and moved about quietly on the branches. The restless Great Tit (*Parus major*) was preening all the time and it soon disappeared into the dense foliage. Nothing could distract the Bay-backed Shrike (*Lanius vittatus*) from its would-be prey.



Great Tit

Small winding streams resulting from the abundant rainfall flowed downwards, some merging to form small rivulets along our muddy path. The sight of the age-old trees, some of them parasitic, growing together, with their gnarled branches spreading far in many shapes and sizes, always leaves one awestruck; numerous species of birds are being sheltered and protected on these branches. We observed the White-bellied Drongo (*Dicrurus caeruleus*) and Plain Prinia (*Prinia inornata*) among them. Hanging cobwebs of giant spiders were swinging in the breeze. Suddenly a sharp piercing call was heard above. The Crested Serpent Eagle (*Spilornis cheela*) was flying, slowly rising higher and higher in the sky.

We climbed onto the small mounds of earth and crossed over into the open space towards the front. Several trees spread their branches, intertwining with the leaves like a huge umbrella. With great effort a Grey-breasted Prinia (*Prinia hodgsonii*) was seen. Still further away, at a fork-like juncture between two shooting

branches, a dark object could be noticed. It took quite some time before Anita could convince everyone that it was an Indian Nightjar (*Caprimulgus asiaticus*). The sighting gave a lot of pleasure to all of us, especially the photographers. A few Yellow-billed Babblers (*Turdoides affinis*) were foraging on the ground.



White-throated Fantail

We moved on cautiously over the wet soil and ended up at a deep gorge full of uneven boulders. The swirling waters gushed over the boulders, making it difficult for most of us to go across. However, a few of the more adventurous birders managed to cross over to the other side. We were walking along slowly when, suddenly, a group of Jungle Babblers (*Turdoides striata*) started calling and hurriedly flew into hiding. We sensed the presence of some predator and, sure enough, there was a Shikra (*Accipiter badius*) which glided down and perched on the top of a nearby tree. All of a sudden there was silence; a typical sign of imminent danger in the wild.



Large-billed Crow

As we moved along, we also saw the Common Hawk Cuckoo (*Hierococcyx varius*), Indian Golden Oriole (*Oriolus oriolus kundoo*) and the Common Iora (*Aegithina tiphia*). The latter was confusing us with different calls, some of which were mimicking other birds. It was enjoyable to hear the sweet music till we caught the culprit red-handed!

By this time the sun had come up and quite a few tiny birds were moving around. One of them was a Greenish Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochiloides*). It took quite some time and great patience before Srikanth could photograph its greenish yellow underbelly to confirm its identity in the presence of other similar-looking birds. Rose-ringed Parakeets (*Psittacula krameri*) in flight made the atmosphere cheerful with their calls and bright green plumage.



Rose-ringed Parakeet



Indian Silverbill

Near the gate a mixed flock of Brahminy Starlings (*Sturnia pagodarum*), Asian Pied Starlings (*Gracupica contra*) and Common Mynas (*Acridotheres tristis*) were calling excitedly. Red-rumped Swallows (*Cecropis daurica*) were circling overhead, trying to feed on the swarms of insects in the air.

We then gathered together and, as always, checked the final list of birds sighted and shared our experiences with each other. The number of species seen was less than expected, but it was definitely worthwhile to visit the beautiful hills and bird in the rain.



Pied Bushchat (female)

The list of birds sighted during the trip is given below:

SI #	Species name	SI #	Species name
1	Indian Peafowl (<i>Pavo cristatus</i>)	23	White-browed Wagtail (<i>Motacilla maderaspatensis</i>)
2	Black-shouldered Kite (<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>)	24	Scaly-breasted Munia (<i>Lanchura punctulata</i>)
3	Crested Serpent Eagle (<i>Spilornis cheela</i>)	25	Black Drongo (<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>)
4	Shikra (<i>Accipiter badius</i>)	26	White-bellied Drongo (<i>Dicrurus caerulescens</i>)
5	Rock Pigeon (<i>Columba livia</i>)	27	Rufous Treepie (<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>)
6	Spotted Dove (<i>Stigmatopelia chinensis</i>)	28	House Crow (<i>Corvus splendens</i>)
7	Laughing Dove (<i>Stigmatopelia senegalensis</i>)	29	Large-billed Crow (<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>)
8	Jacobin Cuckoo (<i>Clamator jacobinus</i>)	30	Wire-tailed Swallow (<i>Hirundo smithii</i>)
9	Common Hawk Cuckoo (<i>Hierococcyx varius</i>)	31	Red-rumped Swallow (<i>Cecropis daurica</i>)
10	Indian Nightjar (<i>Caprimulgus asiaticus</i>)	32	Great Tit (<i>Parus major</i>)
11	Little Swift (<i>Apus affinis</i>)	33	Red-vented Bulbul (<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>)
12	Indian Grey Hornbill (<i>Ocyeros birostris</i>)	34	Greenish Warbler (<i>Phylloscopus trachiloides</i>)
13	Coppersmith Barbet (<i>Megalaima haemacephala</i>)	35	Grey-breasted Prinia (<i>Prinia hodgsonii</i>)
14	Lesser Goldenback (<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>)	36	Yellow-eyed Babbler (<i>Chrysomma sinense</i>)
15	Rose-ringed Parakeet (<i>Psittacula krameri</i>)	37	Tawny-bellied Babbler (<i>Dumetia hyperythra</i>)
16	Common Iora (<i>Aegithina tiphia</i>)	38	Jungle Babbler (<i>Turdoides striata</i>)
17	Small Minivet (<i>Pericocrotus cinnamomeus</i>)	39	Asian Brown Flycatcher (<i>Muscicapa dauurica</i>)
18	Bay-backed Shrike (<i>Lanius vittatus</i>)	40	Indian Robin (<i>Saxicoloides fulicatus</i>)
19	Indian Golden Oriole (<i>Oriolus kundoo</i>)	41	Oriental Magpie Robin (<i>Copsychus saularis</i>)
20	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher (<i>Cyornis tickelliae</i>)	42	Asian Pied Starling (<i>Gracupica contra</i>)
21	Common Myna (<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>)	43	Brahminy Starling (<i>Sturnia pagodarum</i>)

* * *

A Day Trip To Rollapadu, Oct 2016

Ambika Pradhan



Eurasian Collared Dove (Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati)

Winter is always a merry time for birders, with so many migrant species arriving at different parts of the country. We just could not afford to miss such an opportunity and hence five of us (Srikanth, Humayun, Umesh, Lawrence uncle and I) decided to visit Rollapadu WLS. Considering the amount of time it would take to reach the sanctuary, we started from Hyderabad at 4:00AM.



Grey Francolin (Photo: Umesh Mani)

Proceeding to Rollapadu after a brief stop at Kurnool to pick up Umesh, and also to recharge ourselves with steaming hot breakfast, we arrived at the sanctuary by 8:00AM; this gave us ample time to explore the place and look for the beautiful resident as well as migratory birds. As soon as we entered the sanctuary, we were welcomed by a lone Blackbuck peeking curiously through the tall, lush green grass. A few moments later we spotted a small flock of Grey Francolin wandering around on the track, undisturbed by our presence. Large Grey Babbler, Laughing Dove and Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark were some of the other common species we spotted there.



Large Grey Babbler
(Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati)

But there was one bird that kept us on our toes – the Lesser Florican! We were optimistic that the male Florican would jump out in its mating display at any moment. But having no luck with it, just as we decided to go back to the town for lunch, we spotted a raptor swooping down into the grassland, scanning the area for prey. Although it initially looked like a Short-toed Snake Eagle, we later realized from the photos that it was a Montagu's Harrier (female).

As the Harrier disappeared in the grasslands, we spotted a Shikra perched on a tree, not more than 5 feet away from us. It was an amazing sight, and we clicked its photos to our hearts' content before heading back for lunch.



Shikra (Photo: Umesh Mani)



Black-headed Cuckooshrike
(Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati)

Once we were done with lunch, we drove to Alakanur reservoir to see some waterfowl. But the heavy rains that had lashed the region over the last couple of months had flooded the waterbody, which was overflowing and was blocking our access. We returned to the Forest Department Guest House, where bird activity was at full swing, with Rose-ringed Parakeets chattering continuously, a Black Drongo restlessly chasing a Spotted Owlet around, and a Blue-capped Rock Thrush silently moving from tree to tree, undisturbed by the constant chattering around it.



Rose-ringed Parakeet (Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati)



Blue-capped Rock Thrush (female) (Photo: Umesh Mani)

We went back to the sanctuary, still optimistic of spotting a Lesser Florican. Later in the evening, moments after we decided to start back for Hyderabad, a Hen Harrier (female) hovered in front of us and gave good views. As we headed back to Hyderabad, I prayed that at least the next time I visited this place, I should get to spot the Lesser Florican and watch its mating display.



Common Kestrel (female)
(Photo: Umesh Mani)



Indian Golden Oriole (female)
(Photo: Umesh Mani)

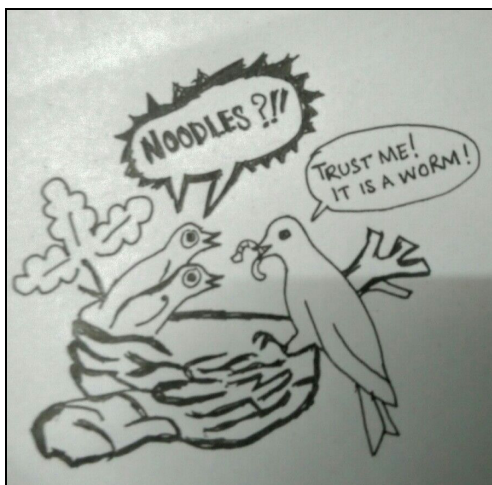
The complete list of birds spotted at Rollapadu:

SI #	Species Name	SI #	Species Name	SI #	Species Name
1	Grey Francolin	24	Red Collared Dove	47	Jerdon's Bushlark
2	Rock Bush Quail	25	Eurasian Collared Dove	48	Ashy Prinia
3	Asian Openbill	26	Common Hawk Cuckoo	49	Zitting Cisticola
4	Painted Stork	27	Asian Koel	50	Common Tailorbird
5	Indian Pond Heron	28	Southern Coucal	51	Western Crowned Warbler
6	Little Egret	29	Spotted Owlet	52	Yellow-billed Babbler
7	Cattle Egret	30	Asian Palm Swift	53	Large Grey Babbler
8	Intermediate Egret	31	Common Hoopoe	54	Common Myna
9	Little Cormorant	32	White-breasted Kingfisher	55	Blue-capped Rock Thrush
10	Common Kestrel	33	Blue-tailed Bee-eater	56	Pied Bushchat
11	Bramhiny kite	34	Green Bee-eater	57	Common Stonechat
12	Hen Harrier	35	Indian Golden Oriole	58	Indian Robin
13	Montagu's Harrier	36	Common Woodshrike	59	Brown-breasted Flycatcher
14	Black Kite	37	Bay-backed Shrike	60	Purple-rumped Sunbird
15	Shikra	38	Southern Grey Shrike	61	Purple Sunbird
16	White-breasted Waterhen	39	Black-headed Cuckooshrike	62	House Sparrow
17	Red-wattled Lapwing	40	Black Drongo	63	Baya Weaver
18	Black-bellied Tern	41	White-bellied Drongo	64	Indian Silverbill
19	River Tern	42	Common Crow	65	Scaly-breasted Munia
20	Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse	43	Dusky Crag Martin	66	White-browed Wagtail
21	Blue Rock Pigeon	44	Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark	67	Tawny Pipit
22	Laughing Dove	45	Singing Bushlark	68	Spot-billed Duck
23	Spotted Dove	46	Rufous-tailed Lark		

* * *

Bird Humour

(Contributed by Bharadwaj Korni)



* * *

Bird of the Month

Text and photo: Umesh Mani

Blue Whistling Thrush (*Myophonus caeruleus*)



Blue Whistling Thrush (Sattal, Uttarakhand, 18-04-2015)

Order: Passeriformes
Family: Muscicapidae
Genus: *Myophonus*
Species: *M. caeruleus*
Size: 31-35 cm

Description & distribution: The Blue Whistling Thrush is a resident breeder across its range from Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Pakistan east across the Himalayas in Nepal, Tibet, Bhutan and India, to Arunachal Pradesh, and extending into south-east Asia, including Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. The widely-dispersed populations show significant differences in size and plumage, and several of the populations are considered as sub-species. The adult Blue Whistling Thrush is dark purple-blue, and it shows glistening silvery-blue spangling on the head and the tips of its body feathers (except for the lores, abdomen and undertail). The forehead, shoulders and fringes of wings and tail are brighter blue. It has a strong yellow bill, and the inner webs of its flight and tail feathers are black. Sexes are similar, but juvenile birds are browner, lack the spangling, and the wings and tail are not as bright blue as the adult.

Habitat & behaviour: The Blue Whistling Thrush is usually seen singly or in pairs, near rivers in heavy forest and well-wooded areas, and quite conspicuous near fast-flowing mountain streams and rivulets; it can, however, often be seen at fair distances from water. It is active well after dusk. It hops about on rocks or grass, and moves about in quick spurts. While foraging, it turns over leaves and small stones to look for its prey. Its diet consists primarily of fruits, snails, crabs, earthworms and insects, but it has been known to prey upon mice and small birds. The alarm call is a shrill *kree*, and it spreads and droops its tail when alarmed. Its usual call, however, is a strident *tzeet-tze-tze-tzeet*, and the song is a very human-like whistle that follows a definite pattern.

Nesting: The Blue Whistling Thrush breeds from April to August, and sings even during the darkness of dawn and dusk, when most other birds are silent. The nest is a cup made of moss, grass and roots, placed on a ledge or inside a hollow near a stream. The usual clutch consists of 3 to 4 eggs, and it is known to sometimes raise a second brood in the same season.

Local name: The Blue Whistling Thrush is known as '*pahari neeli kasturi*' in Punjab, '*kuljel*' or '*kaljit*' in Uttar Pradesh, and '*kastura*' in Himachal Pradesh and Kashmir, where it also goes by the very evocative name of '*hazar dastaan*'.

* * *

For Private Circulation Only

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For information, write to: Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh, PO Box 45, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad – 500034. **E-group:** http://groups.google.co.in/group/bsap_online. **Website:** www.bsap.in. **Society membership** (in Rs.): Annual: 500 per annum; Student: 200 per annum; Corporate: 2000 per annum; Life: 3000. (Add Rs 75 for outstation cheques.)



Newsletter of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh
New Series Volume 13 Number 12 December 2016

FIELD OUTING: Sunday, 18th December 2016: Cherlapally. Meeting point: Punjagutta Cross-roads, 6.30AM.

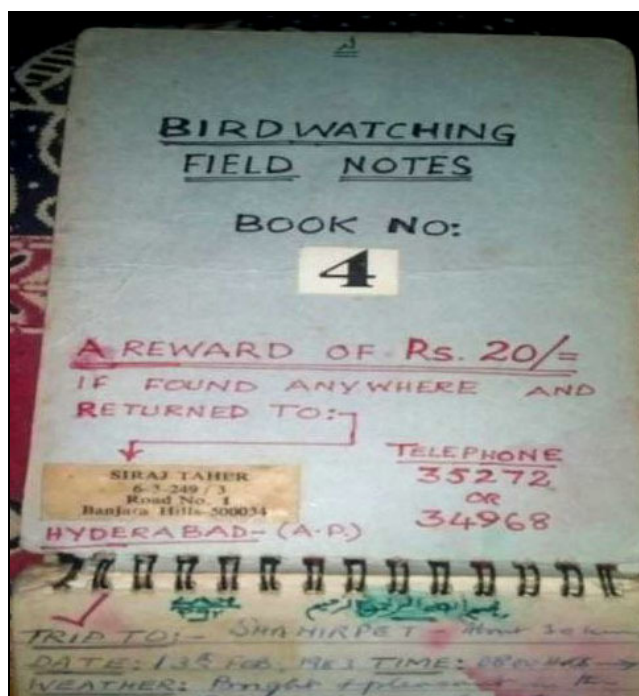
Since it is now mid-winter, a good number of migrant ducks and waders can be expected. In the past, the reeds beside the bund have also yielded interesting sightings like the 3 types of bitterns. This will be a half-day trip. Carry snacks and water as usual. For further details and to co-ordinate, please contact Ms Surekha Aitabathula (99490-38532).

BSAP BIRDING CAMP: Papikonda Wildlife Sanctuary, 9th to 11th December 2016.

Locate near Kakinada, the Papikonda Wildlife Sanctuary spans a total area of 591 sq. km. and covers parts of West Godavari, East Godavari and Khammam districts. Being part of the Eastern Ghats, the sanctuary is home to several rare varieties of wild animals and birds. More details will be shared separately via email on the BSAP group.

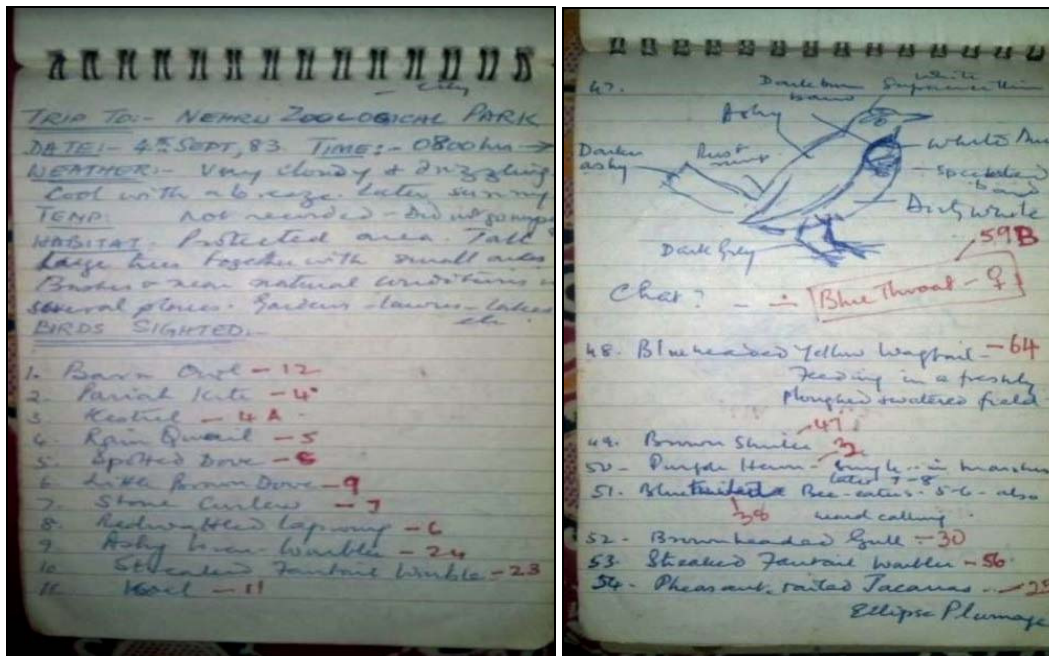
The Art of Observation

Text & photos: Humayun Taher



About a month ago, I was going through my old field notebooks. What I found interesting, apart from some of the exotics that were commonly seen in those days, was the multiple uses to which we put our notebooks. I found the last page of one of these

notebooks full of telephone numbers of people! Another had a page full of names (the old BSAP tradition of taking a membership roll call on every field trip – a tradition that is now extinct – as are a lot of other things!).



After a while, it became a bit of a pain to write out the names laboriously. Obviously, if we saw something we didn't recognize, the notebook still came out; but the need of the hour was an easier way of recording what we saw on the trips. Also

part of the old BSAP tradition was a reading out of the day list at the end of the trip, while we were enjoying the post-birding *chai* and other comestibles. Enter the famous "Tick-list"...

	1	2	3	4
Swallow, Rufous-bellied				
Swallow, White-bellied				
Swallow, Shrike, Ashy				
Swift, House				
Swift, Palm				
Tailor Bird				
Teal, Common				
Teal, Cotton				
Teal, Lesser Whistling				
Tern, Black-bellied				
Tern, Gull-billed				
Tern, Indian River				
Tern, Whiskered				
Thrush, Blue Rock				
Thrush, Black-headed Rock				
Tree Pie, Indian				
Vulture, Long-billed				
Vulture, Scavenger				
Vulture, White-bellied				
Wagtail, Grey				
Wagtail, Large Pied				
Wagtail, White				
Wagtail, Yellow				
Warbler, Ashy Wren				
Warbler, Blyth's Reed				
Warbler, Booted				
Warbler, Franklin's Wren				
Warbler, Greenish				
Warbler, Indian Wren				
Warbler, Jungle Wren				

HYDERABAD REGION

Note:- This is a field-list of the commoner birds of the Hyderabad region, and is arranged alphabetically according to English names. Columns are provided for use on 4 trips. It is recommended that one card be used for 4 visits to the same area so that data for that place is on one card. Prime Birdwatching areas are also shown.

Courtesy: Instrumentation Engineers Pvt. Ltd., Jeedimetla, Hyderabad.

BIRDWATCHER'S SOCIETY OF ANDHRA PRADESH

COMMON BIRDS OF HYDERABAD REGION

The BSAP was founded in 1980 with the object of spreading the message of bird conservation. Services to members include field trips, slide and film shows, discussions and talks, MAYURA the bi-annual Newsletter, PITTA the monthly Bulletin, ID cards and badges. Enjoy Nature - Join BSAP. For details contact: P.O. Box 45, Banjara Hills Post Office, Hyderabad 500 034, India.

Sl.	Place	Date
1	Kolluru WLS - 25 Km	27 Dec
2		
3		
4		

OBSERVER:

Babbler, Common	Cuckoo, Pied Crested	Flowerpecker, Tickell's	Kingfisher, Small Blue	Owl, Barn	Rosy Pastor
Babbler, Jungle	Cuckoo, Plain	Flycatcher, Brown	Kingfisher, White-breasted	Owl, Spotted	Ruff
Babbler, Large Grey	Cuckoo-Shrike, Black-headed	Flycatcher, Paradise	Kite, Black-winged	Parakeet, Blossom-headed	Sandpiper, Common
Babbler, Rufous-bellied	Cuckoo-Shrike, Large	Flycatcher, Red-breasted	Kite, Brahmany	Parakeet, Roseringed	Sandpiper, Green
Babbler, White-headed	Curling, Stone	Flycatcher, Tickell's Blue	Kite, Pariah	Partridge, Grey	Sandpiper, Marsh
Babbler, Yellow-eyed	Darter	Flycatcher, White-bellied Fantail	Koel	Partridge, Painted	Sandpiper, Spotted
Babber, Crimson-breasted	Dove, Little Brown	Gadwall	Lapwing, Red-winged	Peafowl	Shag, Indian
Baya	Dove, Red Turtle	Garganey	Lapwing, Yellow-winged	Pigeon, Blue Rock	Shrike
Bee-Eater, Blue-tailed	Dove, Ring	Goshawk, Black-tailed	Lark, Ashy-crowned Finch	Pigeon, Green	Shoveller
Bee-Eater, Small Green	Dove, Spotted	Grebe, Little	Lark, Red-winged Bush	Pintail	Shrike, Blyth's
Bittern, Chestnut	Drongo, Black	Greenheron	Lark, Rufous-tailed Finch	Pipit, Paddyfield	Shrike, Brown
Bittern, Yellow	Drongo, Grey	Gull, Black-headed	Lark, Short-toed	Pipit, Richard's	Shrike, Grey
Blackthroat	Drongo, White-bellied	Harrier, Marsh	Lark, Singing Bush	Pipit, Tawny	Shrike, Rufous-bellied
Bulbul, Red-vented	Duck, Brahmany	Harrier, Montagu's	Lark, Sykes's Crested	Pitta	Snake, Common
Bulbul, White-browed	Duck, Cane	Harrier, Pallid	Mallard, Small Green-billed	Plover, Kentish	Snake, Painted
Buzzard, Honey	Duck, Spotted	Heron, Grey	Martin, Crag	Plover, Little Ringed	Sparrow, House
Buzzard, White-eyed	Eagle, Bonelli's	Heron, Night	Martin, Dusky Crag	Poacher, Common	Sparrow, Yellow-throated
Chat, Pied Bush	Eagle, Booted	Heron, Pond	Merlin, Red-headed	Poacher, Red-crested	Spoonbill
Chat, Stone	Eagle, Crested Hawk	Heron, Purple	Minivet, Small	Poacher, Tufted	Suit, Black-winged
Coot	Eagle, Greater Spotted	Hoopoe	Moorhen, Indian	Poacher, Small Indian	Suit, Little
Cormorant, Large	Eagle, Lesser Spotted	Hornbill, Grey	Moorhen, Purple	Quail, Common	Suit, Temminck's
Cormorant, Little	Eagle, Short-toed	Bis, Black	Munia, Black-headed	Quail, Jungle Bush	Stork, Open-bellied
Courser, Indian	Eagle, Steppe	Bis, Glossy	Munia, Red	Quail, Rain	Stork, Painted
Crake, Brown	Eagle, Tawny	Bis, White	Munia, Spotted	Redshank	Stork, White-necked
Crake, Ruddy	Egret, Cattle	Iora, Common	Munia, White-throated	Redstart, Black	Sunbird, Purple
Crow, House	Egret, Little	Jacana, Bronze-winged	Myna, Brahmany	Robin, Indian	Sunbird, Purple-rumped
Crow, Jungle	Egret, Large	Jacana, Pheasant-tailed	Myna, Common	Robin, Magpie	Swallow, Cliff
Crow Pheasant	Egret, Median	Kestrel	Nighthawk, Common Indian	Roller, Indian	Swallow, Common
Cuckoo, Common Hawk	Flowerpecker, Thick-billed	Kingfisher, Pied	Oriole, Golden		
Cuckoo, Indian			Osprey		

Still later, we found even this a bit of a fag. More importantly, people decided that all they really wanted to do was to tramp out into the field, peer through their camera viewfinders – and occasionally through binoculars...) – make appropriate admiring noises and then return home. The joys of birding were limited to the time in the field. Post-field activities (which are such an

integral part of birding fun and learning) became either critically endangered or presumed extinct. In all this, it was far easier to have a standard checklist on our computers, which could quickly be modified for the day list. So, the electronic lists came into being...

BSAP Trip to Hyderabad University - 19th June 2011	
1	Lesser Whistling-Duck <i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>
2	Cotton Pygmy-Goose (Cotton Teal) <i>Nettapus coromandelianus</i>
3	Indian Spot-billed Duck <i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>
4	Indian Peafowl <i>Pavo cristatus</i>
5	Grey Francolin <i>Francolinus pondicerianus</i>
6	Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
7	Oriental Darter <i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>
8	Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>
9	Purple Heron <i>Ardea purpurea</i>
10	Great Egret <i>Ardea alba</i>

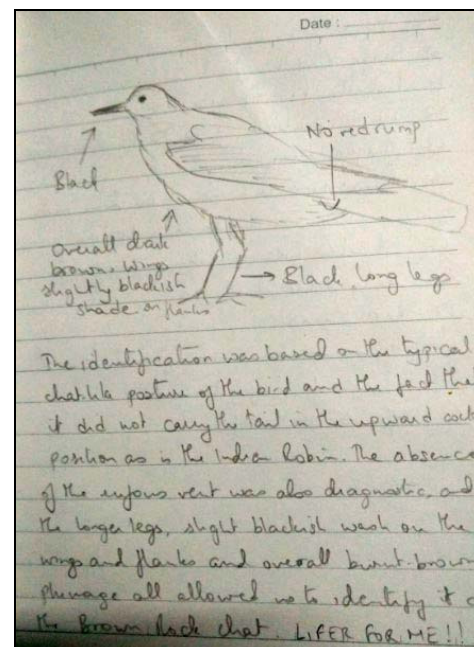
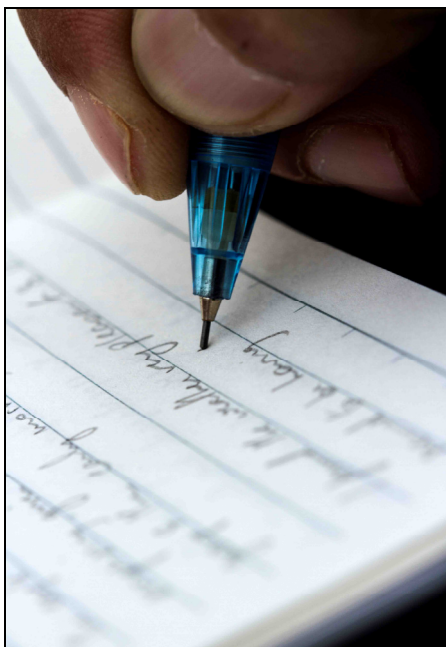
A very basic electronic list

BSAP Field Trip to the Narsapur Reserved Forest area and backwaters of the Narsapur Lake							
Date:		16th August 2015					
Time:		07:45 through 11:45					
Weather:		Rain in the early morning. A thin drizzle for most of the day, but not enough to stop birding. Ground was wet and puddles of water in many places. Max temperature I recorded was 28 degrees C.					
	Status	Species	Scientific name	Name as per eBird (Common Names translated to English(India))	Common Names - Old (As per Ali & Ripley in Pictorial Guide)	Synopsis Number	IUCN Status
1	R	Little Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>	Little Cormorant	Little Cormorant	28	
2	R	Oriental Darter	<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>	Oriental Darter	Darter	29	NT
3	R	Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Little Egret	Little Egret	49	
4	R	Intermediate Egret	<i>Egretta intermedia</i>	Intermediate Egret	Smaller Egret	47	
5	R	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Grey Heron	Grey Heron	36	
6	R	Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	Purple Heron	Purple Heron	37	
7	R	Eastern Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus coromandus</i>	Eastern/Western Cattle Egret	Cattle Egret	44	
8	R	Indian Pond-heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>	Indian Pond-Heron	Pond Heron or Paddybird	42	
9	R	Asian Openbill	<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>	Asian Openbill	Openbill Stork	61	
10	R	Lesser Whistling-duck	<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>	Lesser Whistling-Duck	Lesser Whistling-Teal or Tree Duck	88	

A slightly more “advanced” electronic list

Sherlock Holmes is said to have believed in the adage that “There is nothing new under the sun, my dear Watson. It has all

been done before”. How true this adage is, is now shown by the below photos. Taken during a recent birding trip...



Date: 7 Aug. 2016
 Anceps, Bandan Kanna lakes
 Considerable water now in the Bandan Kanna lake. Good growth of reeds & lotus. The main lake was quite full but bird activity on the main lake was very low. Could be due to the overprotection & the depth.
 Vegetation has become very lush & green with the rains. The trees & bushes have been washed and the rocks are still wet out clearly. Unfortunately could not spot the eagle owl, but that is probably not surprising given the disturbance by the gulls & the early morning sunshine.
 I found the weather very pleasant & it seemed to be having the effect of bringing out a fair number of birds.

Date: _____
 17. Glossy Ibis
 18. Spatbill Duck - overhead flight on the small lake
 19. Cotton Pygmy Goose
 20. Lesser Whistling Teal
 21. Black-winged Kite
 22. Pariah / Black Kite
 23. Brahmany Kite - one bird seen hanging a family of Coots that had a chick. The adult Coot, by hiding the chick under its wing, was able to thwart the kite attack.
 24. Shikra
 25. Grey Francolin - calling
 26. Indian Peafowl - mostly heard calling
 27. Rain Quail - calling
 28. Eurasian Coot - see notes on Brahmany Kite above (qv) Nesting

All of which just goes to show that "What goes around, comes around"!

* * *

Migration Watch Srikanth Bhamidipati

"Migration" – this one word brings a lot excitement for birdwatchers all over the world. It's that time of the year again, when people gear up to welcome the migratory birds to our country and region.

Migration is the seasonal movement of animals from one part of the world to another. Many creatures migrate, including butterflies, fishes and mammals, but the most famous migrants are birds.

Bird migration is an amazing seasonal phenomenon as many species of birds migrate in search of food, which is abundant in warm, sunny places and scarce in dark, snowy locations. Ample food is found in places with longer daytime and this gives enough time for the birds to look for food.

Change in the daylight hours is the first trigger for birds to migrate. Weather, which can vary sometimes, can be unpredictable compared to the daylight hours which are more constant every year. The changes in the biological clocks of the birds act on the hormonal system and cause a few physiological changes like molting and plumage differences, and hence they grow restless and tend to start their migration.

Unlike other fauna, birds need to make a lot of pre-migration preparations, one of the most important of which is to prepare the body for the arduous journey. The birds aim to build up the fat content of the body, as the generally cannot feed properly during

the course of the migration. Body toning, bulking up the body, and molting of feathers are important aspects of a successful migration; molting especially is very important as it produces new light feathers that enable birds to fly efficiently and handle the ensuing wear and tear.

During the migration the birds generally rely on the following:

Sight: They look for locations where they have access to a coastline, river beds, mountain ranges and lakes.

Smell: Every bird has a keen sense of smell, but how far they use this as a sensor/navigation tool needs to be further investigated. For some birds, scents are a confirmed sign of food source, and they may even navigate through the skies following the scents.

Sun: The sun is their guiding force for directions. They get a sense of time and direction by using the position of the sun to identify South. They fly left of the sun in the morning and right of the sun in the afternoon to fly South.

Stars: Some scientific theories postulate that birds fly at night based on the position of the stars.

Community Flocking: The birds generally migrate in large flocks and help each other reach their destinations.

The Risks

Migration is a very risky process for birds. The risk factors are predators, bad weather and human conflicts – which includes wetlands being drained or shrinking, forests being cut down, and other developmental activities which are carried out at the migration sites.

Sudden changes in climate, food and other aspects of the migration location may also impact migration – for instance, sudden storms may blow birds off course leading to exhaustion and enforced halts at unfamiliar or unfavourable locations.

Migration is a critical part of a bird's lifecycle, and a great challenge. Let us do our part to help these migrants in having a safe and pleasant stay.

* * *

Sighting of the Oriental Turtle Dove at Ananthagiri Hills, Sept 2016

Text and photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati



Size	Length: 33-35 cm; Wingspan: 55 cm
Weight	165-274 g
IUCN Status	Least Concern

The Oriental Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia orientalis*), also known as the Rufous Turtle Dove, is identified by the unique black and white stripes on either side of its neck. Reddish-brown underparts, black centers on the wings, reddish edges, red feet, grey bill and scaly appearance are some of the other physical characteristics of the bird. Sexes are similar, but juveniles lack the neck stripes and are much paler in color.

The Oriental Turtle Dove forages on the ground for pine seeds, herbs and plant shoots, but it has also been observed raiding paddy fields. Like other pigeons and doves, the Oriental Turtle Dove drinks frequently, consuming up to 15 percent of its body weight in water every day. Oriental Turtle Doves are monogamous breeders, and both sexes are known to share in the domestic chores. A breeding pair usually moves together, except when a male or female partner is incubating eggs or nestlings.

The breeding season depends on the location; in the north of the range, breeding takes place between May and August, while in south India the breeding season is between November and February (Ali & Ripley, 1989). During the breeding season, the male performs an elaborate display to attract a mate, flying up in the air and then gliding down with the wings and tail stretched outwards. After mating, a nest is constructed from twigs in a bush or tree at a height of no greater than five metres

from the ground. Each nest usually holds 2 eggs which are incubated for 15 to 16 days. The chicks leave the nest after 15 to 17 days. The Oriental Turtle Dove usually breeds in open broad-leaved forests, mixed pine and forest edges and groves, wintering in more open and disturbed habitats, including cultivation. (Source: ARKive, 2016)

In winter, Oriental Turtle Dove populations from north Asia migrate to areas further south, and large flocks may form as they undertake this considerable journey. The majority of the South Asian population, however, does not migrate. The Oriental Turtle Dove occupies a variety of habitats and has been found as high as 4,000 metres in Nepal.

Sightings in Telangana

There are some unconfirmed records of this bird in Hyderabad, but the first known photographic record for this bird was on May 12, 2013, by Anand Madabhushi at Sanjeevaiah Park (17.4358° N, 78.4758° E) (vide Email dated 12/05/2013). On September 28, 2016, we visited the Ananthagiri Hills (17.3120° N, 77.8636° E) and found 2 individuals of this species sitting in the top canopy of a tree at a distance.

Initially we mistook it for a Spotted Dove (*Spilopelia chinensis*) but looking closely at the images we had captured (Fig-1) we realized that these were Oriental Turtle Doves. This makes our sighting only the second documented sighting of this species from the Hyderabad region.

Although the species is reasonably common in its preferred habitat, records from the southern states are scarce. As such, there is a need to undertake regular surveys to investigate the possibility of this species being found in higher numbers in the southern part of the peninsula, or even the possibility that the Hyderabad Plateau lies on its migration route.

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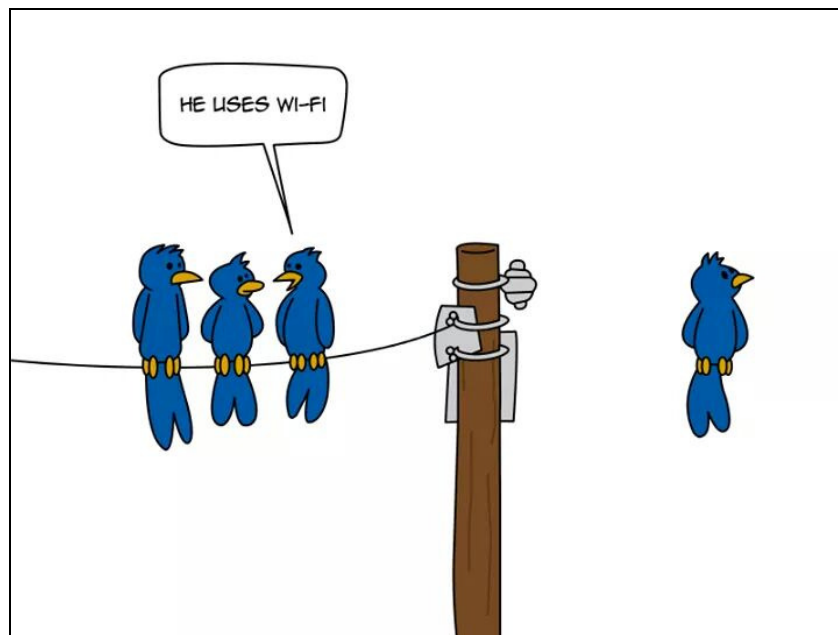
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Bird Humour

(Contributed by Bharadwaj Korni)



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We wish all our members a very happy and prosperous New Year 2017.

Bird of the Month

Text and photo: Umesh Mani

Emerald Dove (*Chalcophaps indica*)



Emerald Dove (Sattal, Uttarakhand, 19-04-2015)

Order: Columbiformes
Family: Columbidae
Genus: *Chalcophaps*
Species: *C. indica*
Size: 23-28 cm

Description & distribution: The Emerald Dove, also known as Asian Emerald Dove, Grey-capped Emerald Dove, Green Dove or Green-winged Pigeon, is a resident breeder in most parts of its range, comprising the tropical and sub-tropical parts of the Indian sub-continent, and extending east across Myanmar, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Taiwan and parts of Japan.

The Emerald Dove is a medium-sized, stocky, broad-winged, pigeon having very distinctive emerald-green upperparts. The male has a prominent white supercilium and forehead, and a grey crown and white shoulder-patch which are missing in the female. The underparts and sides of the head are deep vinaceous pink, fading to greyish on the lower belly. Tail and flight feathers are blackish. In flight, the latter show chestnut undersides; also visible are buff underparts and black-and-white barring on the lower back. It has a bright red bill, rufous feet and legs, and dark-brown eyes. The female has a generally browner complexion, with a warm brown crown, neck and underparts, and a grey shoulder-patch. The juvenile is similar to the female, but has dark-grey barring on a buffy-white forehead, narrow buff borders on neck and underparts, a brownish bill, rufous rump, and brown primaries and tertials with chestnut tips. The Sri Lankan sub-species, *C. i. robinsoni*, shows the grey colour of its crown

extending as broad lines down the sides of the neck. The other recognized sub-species are the nominate *C. i. indica* of south-east Asia, *C. i. maxima* and *C. i. augusta* of Andaman and Nicobar Islands respectively, *C. i. natalis* of Christmas Island, Australia, and *C. i. minima* of the Numfor, Biak and Mios Num Islands of Indonesia.

Habitat & behaviour: The Emerald Dove, which is usually seen singly, or in pairs or small groups, frequents dry deciduous forests, rainforests and broad-leaved forests in wet regions like mangroves, farms, gardens, coastal green patches and woodlands. It is mainly terrestrial, foraging for fallen fruits, and is fairly approachable, tending to walk away rather than fly when disturbed. Its flight is fast and direct, with typical pigeon-like rapid wingbeats and the occasional sharp flick of its wings. It is quite agile while flying through forests. Its diet consists mainly of fruits, berries and seeds of a wide variety of plants. Its soft cooing call consists of a series of six to seven coos, progressively increasing in volume; they also sometimes utter a nasal *hoo hoo hoon*.

Nesting: The Emerald Dove nests mainly between January and May, with some local variations. The nest is a bare, flimsy twig platform, built on trees or bamboo clumps up to 5 metres above ground. The usual clutch consists of 2 creamy yellow eggs.

Local name: The Emerald Dove is known as 'raj ghughu' in Bengali, 'andi bellaguvva' in Telugu, and 'padaki pura', 'maragada pura' or 'thamil pura' in Tamil.

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